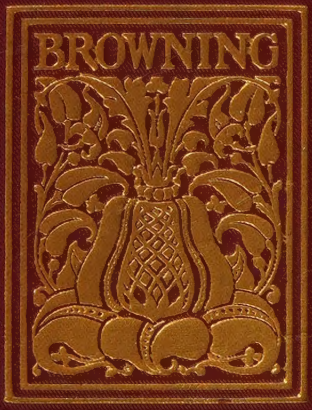
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PRINCE HOHENSTIEL-SCHWANGAU

FIFINE AT THE FAIR

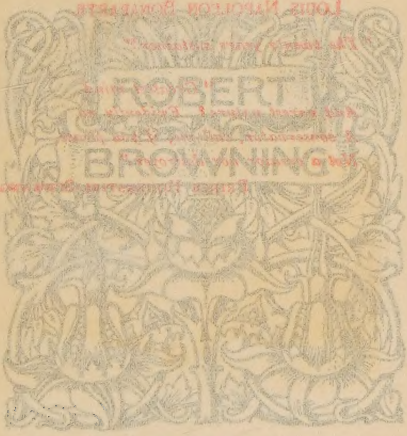
PACCHIAROTTO, ETC.

Prince Hohenstiel-Schwangau

Fifine at the Fair

Pacchiarotto

Miscellaneous Poems



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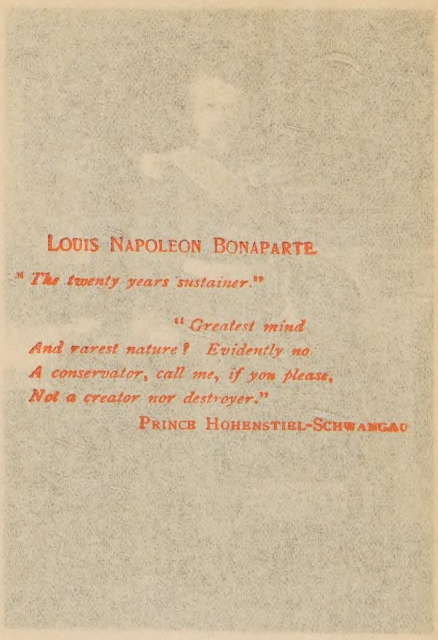

LOUIS NAPOLEON BONAPARTE

"The twenty years sustainer."

"Greatest mind
And rarest nature? Evidently no
A conservator, call me, if you please,
Not a creator nor destroyer."

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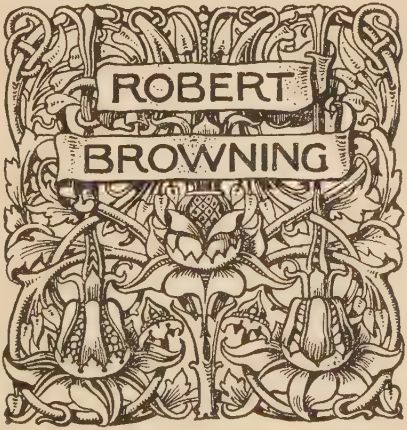

THOMAS·Y·CROWELL·
COMPANY·NEW~YORK

PRINCE HOHENSTIEL-SCHWANGAU

FIFINE AT THE FAIR

PACCHIAROTTO, ETC.

BY

ROBERT BROWNING

From the Author's Revised Text

Edited with Introductions and Notes by

CHARLOTTE PORTER AND HELEN A. CLARKE

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INTRODUCTION.

THE spectacular side of the Cæsarian idea has always had a peculiar fascination for the French people. The nation tracing its birth more directly than any other of the younger nations of Europe to the old Roman founts of modern civilization was the natural heir of the political tendency impressed so mightily upon the world by Julius Cæsar, the conqueror of all Gaul.

Yet, ever since the Frankish Charlemagne steered the course of mediæval Europe by the star of Imperialism, and to the poets and popes of Italy, to Germany, Austria, Russia, England herself, descended some contagious political influence shed by the splendor of that auspicious, baleful star, France seems ever to have felt its influence most on the side of grace and social comeliness. Not only were the humanitarian and the ideal-ceremonial aspects of Imperialism the lures by which the modern Cæsars, Napoleon I. and Napoleon III., were able to tempt the French nation successfully; but both of these exploiters of the dream of world-domination were themselves tempted by the same fair lures they employed. The more sincere they themselves appeared to be in their desire to attain the social good, the more successful they were in their domination. The more they grew aware of the self-

glorification secretly pricking on their idealistic ambition, the more they humored and revealed their own vanity and laid themselves open to suspicion, until the deep humanly based buttresses, the wide world-spanning arches supporting their lordly domes insidiously, steadily crumbled to ashes.

> " Our insincerity on both our heads !
> No matter what the object of a life,
> Small work or large, — the making thrive a shop,
> Or seeing that an empire take no harm, —
> There are known fruits to judge obedience by."

So Browning makes the second French Emperor state the test of his own career.

In " Prince Hohenstiel-Schwangau " Browning has given his Napoleon the Third the credit of being genuinely attracted by the humanitarian qualities in the political theories he made use of ; but he has also made him hold himself responsible for the honest fulfilment of his chosen function. The result is such an interpretation of his life and mission as the man himself might wish to plead, and such a criticism of his actual shortcomings as only an acceptance of his high intentions could supply.

This undidactic method of framing an apology so as to excuse the speaker to the utmost and yet reveal by indirection some inherent falsity of his position, his obtuseness, or weakness, is characteristic of Browning. Aristophanes, Bishop Blougram, Sludge, the husband in " Fifine at the Fair," Hohenstiel-Schwangau, — all accuse themselves by excusing themselves. The man himself supplies with his own view of himself the clew to a just estimate, and often, too, with his own mannerisms he suggests the right pose for a lifelike portrait. In " Prince Hohenstiel-Schwangau " the

inwardly brooding habit of mind peculiar to Louis Napoleon is seized upon, and is made to determine the form in which the poem is cast. As Blougram, the prosperous prelate, is revealed over his wine at his own dinner-table, rolling out before his literary guest "a mind long crumpled till creased consciousness lay smooth;" so in this poem the Sphynx who puzzled all Europe is presented in solitude floating out a reverie in cigar-smoke, and solacing his dreamy soul by confiding a justification of his past life to an imaginary Laïs. He fancies her to be enjoying with him some future return of his old days of London exile; and after all this musing, quite irrelevant to the decision he is represented as actually contemplating, he takes a step about to influence his future irreparably.

From one instant of his life Laïs is to be enabled, by his revealment of the meaning of his action, to unravel his whole mystery. He imputes to God the faculties and the desires of body and mind peculiar to himself with which he was born, considering that the right exercise of these to the end seeming to him good is not only his own prerogative and pleasure, but God's way of acting in concert with him for the carrying on of the world's work. His tendency is to make use of what is ready to his hand, — neither originating an entirely new scheme nor marring one already made, but rather completing it. This is his especial gift. It is as natural as it is for him, having rested awhile and craving employment, to draw a line connecting the two blots he finds on a bit of paper instead of making a separate third blot.

From this trivial but not inapt illustration the sort of political service he accounted himself able to yield the world appears. It is not that of a social renovator, or

pioneer of any sort, but merely that of a conservator, — one who carries incompleteness on a stage and does the best with the least change possible.

The one fact in Louis Napoleon's background of life being Napoleon the Great, and the second, as incontrovertibly present in the social atmosphere of the Europe of the seething middle of the nineteenth century, being the uprising of the people everywhere against repression, it is obvious that the course of political achievement adopted by a man capable only of carrying "incompleteness on a stage," would be to attempt a fusion of the old idea of Imperialism with the new need of popular expansion. To draw the symmetric line between these two pre-established facts would be to attain rule through democratic means, but to permit no rash radical measures to deflect that line unduly and create a third strange fact to complicate the simple aim of merely making use of what already is. For this reason he must discourage the Comtes, Fouriers, and Proudhons, despots of the Idea, who would take the people on, not in the people's way, but in their own. Instead of feeding souls with enthusiastic dreams, his purpose is to spend enthusiasm in feeding with bread the craving bodies of the crude masses of humanity, that they may take the first step in their development To combine and hold all intact is task enough for him.

The equal sustainment of all parts of the body politic, with no undue encouragement of any one part at the expense of any other, is what he tried to do ; and the strain necessary to keep the pressure equalized everywhere, to save and hold society sound and safe for twenty years, taxed every energy.

Is this an overestimate of the part Louis Napoleon

played in the middle of the century? On the one side, it is to be remembered, stood Metternich and the "Holy Alliance;" on the other the philosophic ideas, — anarchistic, socialistic, or communistic, which are still in the air at the close of the century. Scarcely one of those disturbing, regenerating ideas at present agitating social theory and modifying social practice was not mooted by some pioneer thinkers before 1848. An almost desperate stickling of the friends of privilege for the maintenance of the old régime and their own undiminished prerogatives stood ready to oppose the yeasty revolutionary spirit breaking out in every country of Europe.

A glance at the historic conditions which Browning's ingeniously insinuated allusions summon up before the reader may suffice to make him realize what a violent clash and rending of society was avoided by the dominance in France and the mediation throughout Europe of the Anglicized Bonaparte, Louis Napoleon. His degree of sympathy with both camps, continually disappointing to both, and being never quite clear to either, bridged the conflict, maintaining the *status quo* very nearly, yet without permitting the retrogressive policy of Austria to retain the lead and antagonize the future. He but postponed the day, it may be objected, when a new system of civilization must be instituted. But if so, and the threatened change be still to make, the old interests will be nearer their natural death, the new ideas will but have gained ripeness by their enforced long incubation, and grown abler to grapple with the situation.

The poet, at any rate, makes the Emperor base his claims to serve society upon his unification of Europe at a trying time. And not altogether unwarrantably, as

far as his general policy of diplomatic influence is concerned, did he praise himself as "biggest heart and best of Europe's friends."

In the second part of the poem, by bringing forward from two points of view — one shrewd, the other disinterested — the special events wherewith the policy of equable sustainment and impartial action for the general good was inconsistent, calling for explanation and accommodation, discrepancies are revealed. Wherever a quite partial policy of family aggrandizement and personal glory intervened, the Prince's excuses are turned into very subtle accusations. His own theory of his mission in the light of facts fails to support him in all particulars: in the treaty signed with Austria, for example, after the first experiment in disinterested warfare, the war for the freeing of Italy; or in the *sénatus-consulte* that decreed to his son the heirship of the Empire. Satirically enough, in the light of an event not yet supposed to have taken place at the time of his imagined reverie, the Franco-German war, is the second Emperor's determination against wars of rivalry introduced at the close of a noble elegy of the nation that so loves the finer side of Imperialism, —

> "the race all flame and air
> And aspiration to the boundless Great,
> The incommensurably Beautiful
> Whose very falterings groundward come of flight
> Urged by a pinion all too passionate
> For heaven and what it holds of gloom and glow:
> Bravest of thinkers, bravest of the brave
> Doers, exalt in Science, rapturous
> In Art, the — more than all — magnetic race
> To fascinate their fellows, mould mankind."

And then this: —

> "Genius has somewhat of the infantine:
> But of the childish, not a touch nor taint

Except through self-will, which, being foolishness,
Is certain, soon or late, of punishment
Which Providence avert! — and that it may
Avert what both of us would so deserve,
No foolish dread o' the neighbor, I enjoin!
By consequence, no wicked war with him,
While I rule!"

The downfall whose hour is gathering fulness while he sits, as this poem pictures him, musing half forebodingly, is traced by innuendo rather than blunt speech, but only the more unanswerably for that, to the personal weakness which led him more and more to humor the vain Imperialistic pretensions of his family and his beloved nation at the expense of the general social welfare.

The equable sustainment becoming unequal, the beautiful structure he had built lost balance, and Sédan followed.

The image of Napoleon III. that is carried away with the reader of his Apology is the appropriate one of a hesitating man dreaming amid lazy smoke-wreaths of past actions, and forestalling future opinion of himself, on the eve of a great disaster.

The figure that stays in the mind after reading the argument of the Apologist of "Fifine at the Fair" is equally tell-tale. It is that of the husband concluding his argument successfully, walking homeward with "one idle arm thrown slack" behind him, with the "open hand defenceless" at his back, ready — "perhaps inconsciously"! — to receive the letter from Fifine that was "pushed betwixt palm and glove." What need of express moral is there when an argument, however ingenious, plausible, and even true and penetrating in discernment, ends with a prepared-for fact like this? Here is no ordinary Don Juan, any

more than Louis Bonaparte was an ordinary emperor, and yet — It is but true and fair to give both of them the benefit of the genuine change of outlook. The high aims which attract them they almost succeed in persuading themselves that they desire beyond any merely personal gratification. Weakness instead of grossness, a half-unconscious insincerity instead of a cynical hypocrisy, a failure in energy of aspiration rather than a lack of aspiration itself, best characterize them. So says their poet, — never explicitly, however, as it is here adduced, but dramatically, picturesquely, despite all their admirable defence of themselves, and by means of the lifelike image of them left in the mind's eye by way of comment on the gap between their high pretensions and their actual performance.

The indolent colloquial blank verse of "Hohenstiel-Schwangau" is free as prose apparently, but rhythmic, and variously uniform in make. It is very sparingly made poetically alluring. It kindles into an emotion that moves and uplifts, in a fine passage that breaks the level flow of Hohenstiel's talk to record the enthusiasm of the youthful Prince for the freeing of Italy : —

> "Crumbled arch, crushed aqueduct,
> Alive with tremors in the shaggy growth
> Of wild-wood, crevice-sown, that triumphs there
> Imparting exultation to the hills,
> Sweep of the swathe when only the winds walk
> And waft my words above the grassy sea
> Under the blinding blue that basks o'er Rome, —
> Hear ye not still — 'Be Italy again'?
> And ye, what strikes the panic to your heart?
> Decrepit council-chambers, — where some lamp
> Drives the unbroken black three paces off
> From where the graybeards huddle in debate,
> Dim cowls and capes, and midmost glimmers one
> Like tarnished gold, and what they say is doubt,

And what they think is fear, and what suspends
The breath in them is not the plaster-patch
Time disengages from the painted wall
Where Rafael moulderingly bids adieu,
Nor tick of the insect turning tapestry
Which a queen's finger traced of old, to dust;
But some word, resonant, redoubtable,
Of who once felt upon his head a hand
Whereof the head now apprehends his foot.
'Light in Rome, Law in Rome, and Liberty
O' the soul in Rome — the free Church, the free State!'"

The fine apostrophe to France, already cited, is almost the only other passage of this nature. Both, laudable in another poet on the score of beauty alone, are here not merely beautiful in themselves, but doubly beautiful because both historically and dramatically fit; since "sighs of the soul" like these for Italy and France, the one full of the fervor of youth, the other of the ardor of a patriotic man, breathe the burden of Louis Bonaparte's two deepest political sincerities.

"Fifine at the Fair" is much more seductive poetically than the Hohenstiel piece. Its long, flexible Alexandrine couplets are grouped in stanzas that mount and fall capriciously, in slight or larger volume, like sea-waves. It is so rich in picturesque descriptions, such as the mask of "well-sung women-worthies whereof loud fame" still echoes, or the sunset in stanza cvi, that they scarcely need to be pointed out. The subtleties of the theme cannot hide them even from a casual glance. And this poetic luxuriance is dramatically appropriate to its hero. Considered as an apology for him, this poem has much in common with the earlier poem. It is distinguished from it by a greater complexity in detail and movement, and also by an unusual literary background.

The literary background of the poem contributes

towards the reinforcement of its philosophy of constancy, as a fruit of ripe development. The mutual positions of husband and wife are made significant by the employment of a sort of symbolic suggestion adapted from two sources, — one the old Don Juan story, the other Euripides' tale of Helen of Troy.

From Molière's version of the Don Juan story the motto is taken, and with that note ringing in the ear the poem opens, and the husband-motive as it were is presented. The husband himself is then made to place in the foreground of the plan the wife-motive, the Helen suggestion supplied by Euripides. The dual quality of the wife as real and as phantom — the quality confessedly borrowed from Euripides' play — fits the argument by which it is proposed to make the phantom wife judge "the tearful true Elvire." It accompanies the imagery all through of the false showing the real, and in the conclusion again, especially, the phantom Elvire is as mutely powerful in her ascendency over this whole metaphoric drama as the presence of Cæsar's ghost over the last part of "Julius Cæsar."

It is a curious coincidence that in the deep-reaching works of art that treat of the riper love of husband and wife, — Euripides' "Alkestis," Shakespeare's "Winter's Tale," — this idea of the wife as a spirit, or as meeting the death of the body and transcending it, recurs. So Molière's ghost of Elvire visiting Don Juan to warn him of his impending doom suggests the enduring quality of spiritualized love. Browning's phantom of "the tearful true Elvire" blends with an ideal wife at the close of "Fifine," in the Epilogue, to stand for something more than a mere ghost of a dead love, — a saint vanishing from a sinner who refuses to repent, as the nun Elvire in Molière's play vanishes

from the doomed Don Juan. The mute touch of Alkestis' hand or Hermione's embrace finds in Elvire a voice mocking Death, and resting secure in the greater power of the spirit. She declares with them that "Love is all, and Death is naught."

On the other hand, the Don Juans of story have been sceptical of the power of the spirit. The sensual has been their hold. Contemptuous of life without flesh, the Don Juan of tradition challenges the dead to go to supper with him, and, with the deep wisdom underlying popular legends, the story asserts the supremacy of the spirit by making the statue of the dead man whose daughter Juan wronged, accept his challenge.

Interpreting the myth of Euripides symbolically, the reverse of the Don Juan way of thinking is implied. Another sort of scepticism is involved — scepticism of the accepted every-day materiality. So in Euripides the fleshly appearance becomes the unreality. The fair body that "launched a thousand ships and burnt the topless towers of Ilium" is turned phantom, while the real woman is she who waits afar off till Menelaus shall come to know that he has been cheated by an apparition of the senses.

Browning's scepticism is of the same allusive, suggestive nature as Euripides'. He has made his Don Juan a believer in the spiritual, whose claims for the sensuous are steered along the defensible tack that the hunt for novel sensations is warranted by the exciting influence of varied sense-impressions upon the mind. This is an assertion, virtually, of the dominance of spirit within the field of flesh instead of a denial of its power. Excursions in sensuous experimentation are not claimed to be actually good in themselves, but as conducing to the development of spirit. It is not in-

consistent with an acknowledgment of the superior good of one chosen love, and as leading to the ultimate attainment of constancy. Yet, spite of all, the end of the poem exposes his fine pretensions to the appreciation of a spiritually developed love. Like the crudest Don Juan of history, he, too, has his fling at the wronged spirit. If it wait for him in vain, why, then, let it "slip from flesh and blood and play the ghost again!" It is against this taunt that the Epilogue asserts, figuratively, the mystical power of the developed soul.

As with Mr. Sludge and Bishop Blougram, the apology may be right or wrong, or both together mixed; it is the relation of the apology to the apologizer that is the heart of the matter.

Summing up the main divisions of his argument, there appears: I. The worth of the individual man or woman. Value of some sort belongs to every person, even to Fifine. The fairness of the single claim she makes upon man is urged, that if she give pleasure she be paid for that, while she keeps her real self beyond possession. Other women would have him wreak himself upon their unique quality, — Helen exacting supreme homage; Cleopatra, supreme charm the Saint, a virginal sanctity; Elvire, the eternal persistence of her belovedness. Fifine alone exacts no claim and yields none.

II. All value makes appeal to the individual, — the relative quality to the relative taste. The type of absolute beauty latent in any one is made perfect only to the loving eye. More beautiful than beauty's self is this internal figuring forth of the beauty manifest in soul's domain, and forever belonging to the seeing soul. So in a shapeless bulk of stone he has divined the Eidothée of Michael Angelo.

III. All love, as all artistic pleasure, is based on this relative revelation of a soul imagined absolute. Thence follows the conclusion: Love's law. Through Individualization, Relativity, Development, each soul living its own life acquires its own peculiar capacity to attain conjointly with another soul a revelation of the absolute.

When Elvire observes that this conception of the soul-empire of love leaves no room for his abandonment to mere momentary amusements of the senses, he offers in defence a threefold process of reasoning as to the development of Soul through Sense, like that outlined as to the development of Love through Individualization: I. That just as a man cannot live either in air or water alone, but by use of both may succeed in doing both, so by help of flesh and spirit joined he attains to the life of the soul. II. That in no aid made use of is there positive value for him, but in the relation his own nature sets up with each is he enabled to lay hold on an absolute Good, and thus to find truth through the instrumentality of the false; all shows of the senses being in themselves naught, so far as he is concerned, but means to progress, as the elusive fluidity within the wave grasped through, not gripped and retained, convoys him at his will half immersed in water, half emerged towards sky. III. That in this, too, self-confidence is necessary, and individuality is what counts.

Elvire fails to be satisfied, since his assumption that mind is his real interest, and that bodies serve but to show him mind, is inconsistent with his employment for this growth of women exclusively. His own development of soul-power argues an equivocal dependence on flesh as such, instead of that ability to transcend it, which makes for progress.

Here is, indeed, the point. In a word, as Browning makes him say, "*I* need to be proved true," — not his reasoning, but himself.

The pertinent question for this Don Juan is his personal application of the principle discovered by his own ingenious exposition of the fundamental importance of individualism, and the advantage of reciprocal individual development, as leading to that sort of union figured forth in his phrase from Æschylus, — of "God and man, and both together mixed."

The plot now expands, shifting from the narrow confines of Pornic Fair and questions of the relations of this particular husband and wife to successively larger fields of action. From the imaginary stage supplied by Schumann's "Carnival," the scene passes, dream-fashion, to Venice Square, and thence broadens out into the open Fair of the whole wide world. That democratic assemblage becomes more unqualifiedly democratic, finally, through the significant plunge downward of the dreamer himself from the coign of vantage, whence he had seemed to overlook the whole, into the level midst of the motley, surging throng he has been describing. All these scenes exemplify development in human attainment through social relations — love on a wider plane. The poem ranges through these scenes to verify the law of love based on individual value, relation, development, and the law of growth, urging man to attain, through the partial and the false and the ugly, to the perfect, the true, and the beautiful.

Through perception that change is the only stability, relativity the very truth, all is focussed at last in the idea of the permanence and unity symbolized in the perpetual significance of Love, typified in the primeval

Druid monument as the source of human life, and active in all social relations as the moving force for all development.

This wide circuit of thought and dream then closes in the relations of the husband to Elvire and Fifine. The prearranged summons from Fifine adds its satirical comment on the husband's conclusion that "Inconstancy means raw" and "Faith alone means ripe." It seems also to carry with it a reflection for Elvire. Fifine represents a valuable but undeveloped element of individualism for women. She has helped to show Elvire not only the flaw in her marriage-bond, but the way to strengthen it; the implication being that the only love on which to base a persisting union is one which encourages the development of two equally strong souls.

In the "Pacchiarotto" group of poems Browning has bound in one sheaf a variety of shorter pieces. Literary art and criticism is the dominant note, the initial poem, the little Shakespearian group directly following it — "At the Mermaid," "Shop," and "House" — and the Epilogue, all bearing upon his distinctive principles of literary art and the censure they encounter. With these the Prologue, vaguer and more symbolic in its reference to his own work, may be also classed; since it suggests in its intangible way his relations with one, sanctuaried beyond the darkling earth, to whom he turns for stimulation in the disheartening task of holding out against the opposition of grosser theories of life and art than theirs.

After this tender lyrical outburst he turns with a very different gusto to a freakish rasping double- and triple-rhymed address to his critics, wherein under the guise of an anecdote of a Sienese painter he jocularly

insinuates that vanity is the main element in the outfit of certain persons who consider themselves competent to trim poetic individualities to the pattern they approve. In the concluding stanzas he drops even the slight mask of the anecdote from his laughing face, and indulges his humor in rollicking home-thrusts at reviewers whose personality is not far to seek. The tone is riotously contemptuous, yet scarcely unwarranted, for there were reviews at about this time which disclosed a personal opposition rather than genuine criticism against the evident rising of the tide of popular favor towards Browning. The poet's own words, in a letter to Dr. Furnivall, rate the early reviews more quietly at their value: "So much misconception at best, ignorance at middling, and malice at worst, in those old slaps on my face in order apparently to keep some fellow's critical hands warm! Yourself, and those like you, are the best suffumigators after this old smell; why keep a whiff of it to show how nastily I lived for a long while, sustained abundantly, however, by many a kindlier breathing from various quarters — only, the 'sweet south' 'creeps' or 'steals' silently, while the unpleasantness is, as Donne phrases it, 'a loud perfume.' No, let us bid good-bye to it all; not to real conscientious criticism, by any means, but to mere mopping and mowing and monkey-tricks."

By the time he wrote "Pacchiarotto" the poet could afford to laugh at these "monkey-tricks," wherefore the silence with which he withstood earlier censure broadened now for once into this colossal mirth of his sixty-fourth birthday.

The Epilogue is more serious, referring once more to the "Lyric Love" from whose impassioned lips his text is taken. Otherwise it is scarcely less confi-

dent in tone. It has a serener ring, but is almost as easy of rhyme. It raises the objection, made in good earnest, that if his poetic vintage be designedly brewed with a view to permanent strength, its quality of mellowness would not be generally evident at once, but need time to bring out its aroma. His scorn of the pretence that censure of his lack of grace is based on deep delight in the master-poets and thorough knowledge of the secrets of their skill, is even more overwhelming of dwarfish criticism than the Prologue. Like the young Jew in his own satiric addition to the story he retells from Baldinucci, who finds his best defence from a narrow religious bigotry in a wider outlook which the slow judgment of time confirms, so Browning makes his appeal from the temporary and ephemeral criticism that is adverse to him, to a better-grounded literary criticism of the future.

Envy and cynicism, as Shakespeare met them, next naturally engage his attention in "At the Mermaid," where the great Elizabethan's attitude towards them is portrayed with peculiar sympathy. Personal gossip founded on nothing more substantial than the literal interpretation of artistic expression is hit off in "House." Petty judgment of the depths of character resting on mere superficial traits or meagre external facts is glanced upon caustically in "Shop." In both of these poems, also, this criticism of critics has especial reference to Shakespeare. His pre-eminently dramatic quality, Browning evidently considers, has not yet been sufficiently allowed for in the solving of Shakespearian moot-points by wits on a level necessarily so alien to his that they cannot put themselves sufficiently in the right relation with his distinctive genius to judge him. This is Browning's way of saying that

a sympathetic apprehension of a poet's individuality of gift and design in work is the fundamental element in competent criticism ; also that this is above all requisite in work distinguished by any variety of dramatic ability.

Among the remaining pieces in this collection are examples of the poet's peculiar handicraft and inspiration in almost all his special modes. His characteristic dramatic briefs are represented by one of his most skilful and thrilling monologues, "A Forgiveness ;" his heroic ballads, by one of his most stirring and popular, "Hervé Riel." A minor but winsome expression of constant love, "St. Martin's Summer," stands for the dramatic lyric ; "Bifurcation," for the dramatic romance. In "Fears and Scruples" is concentrated as deep a religious significance as in any of the old-time long and profound poems of this class. "Pisgah-Sights" are speculative lyrics in whose tones dwells a sweet and cheery solemnity like church chimes. Nor can one bear to leave out from this brief survey the companion lyrical whims "Natural Magic" and "Magical Nature." Finally, belonging with the more important poems is the unique "Numpholeptos," a haunting, fascinating, enigmatical poem of womanhood. Here is the symbolistic lyrical expression of the beautiful futility of that old exaltation of a woman as man's idol, a being held apart from the developing actualities of life, which found its philosophical and dramatic exposition at full length in the relations of the husband and Elvire in "Fifine at the Fair."

CHARLOTTE PORTER.
HELEN A. CLARKE.

PRINCE
HOHENSTIEL-SCHWANGAU,

SAVIOUR OF SOCIETY.

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Ὕδραν φονεύσας, μυρίων τ' ἄλλων πόνων
διῆλθον ἀγέλας . . .
τὸ λοίσθιον δὲ τόνδ' ἔτλην τάλας πόνον,
. . . δῶμα θριγκῶσαι κακοῖς.

I slew the Hydra, and from labor pass'd
To labor — tribes of labors! Till, at last,
Attempting one more labor, in a trice,
Alack, with ills I *crowned the edifice.*

You have seen better days, dear? So have I —
And worse too, for they brought no such bud-mouth
As yours to lisp "You wish you knew me!" Well,
Wise men, 't is said, have sometimes wished the same,
And wished and had their trouble for their pains.
Suppose my Œdipus should lurk at last
Under a pork-pie hat and crinoline,
And, lateish, pounce on Sphynx in Leicester Square?
Or likelier, what if Sphynx in wise old age,
Grown sick of snapping foolish people's heads,
And jealous for her riddle's proper rede, —
Jealous that the good trick which served the turn
Have justice rendered it, nor class one day
With friend Home's stilts and tongs and medium-ware, —
What if the once redoubted Sphynx, I say,

(Because night draws on, and the sands increase,
And desert-whispers grow a prophecy)
Tell all to Corinth of her own accord,
Bright Corinth, not dull Thebes, for Laïs' sake,
Who finds me hardly gray, and likes my nose,
And thinks a man of sixty at the prime?
Good! It shall be! Revealment of myself!
But listen, for we must co-operate;
I don't drink tea: permit me the cigar!

First, how to make the matter plain, of course —
What was the law by which I lived. Let 's see:
Ay, we must take one instant of my life
Spent sitting by your side in this neat room:
Watch well the way I use it, and don't laugh!
Here 's paper on the table, pen and ink:
Give me the soiled bit — not the pretty rose!
See! having sat an hour, I 'm rested now,
Therefore want work: and spy no better work
For eye and hand and mind that guides them both,
During this instant, than to draw my pen
From blot One — thus — up, up to blot Two — thus —
Which I at last reach, thus, and here 's my line
Five inches long and tolerably straight:
Better to draw than leave undrawn, I think,
Fitter to do than let alone, I hold,
Though better, fitter, by but one degree.
Therefore it was that, rather than sit still
Simply, my right-hand drew it while my left
Pulled smooth and pinched the moustache to a point.

Now I permit your plump lips to unpurse:
"So far, one possibly may understand

Without recourse to witchcraft!" True, my dear.
Thus folks begin with Euclid, — finish, how?
Trying to square the circle! — at any rate,
Solving abstruser problems than this first
"How find the nearest way 'twixt point and point."
Deal but with moral mathematics so —
Master one merest moment's work of mine,
Even this practising with pen and ink, —
Demonstrate why I rather plied the quill
Than left the space a blank, — you gain a fact,
And God knows what a fact 's worth! So proceed
By inference from just this moral fact
— I don't say, to that plaguy quadrature
"What the whole man meant, whom you wish you knew,"
But, what meant certain things he did of old,
Which puzzled Europe,— why, you 'll find them plain,
This way, not otherwise: I guarantee,
Understand one, you comprehend the rest.
Rays from all round converge to any point:
Study the point then ere you track the rays!
The size o' the circle 's nothing; subdivide
Earth, and earth's smallest grain of mustard-seed,
You count as many parts, small matching large,
If you can use the mind's eye: otherwise,
Material optics, being gross at best,
Prefer the large and leave our mind the small —
And pray how many folk have minds can see?
Certainly you — and somebody in Thrace
Whose name escapes me at the moment. You —
Lend me your mind then! Analyze with me
This instance of the line 'twixt blot and blot
I rather chose to draw than leave a blank,
Things else being equal. You are taught thereby

That 't is my nature, when I am at ease,
Rather than idle out my life too long,
To want to do a thing — to put a thought,
Whether a great thought or a little one,
Into an act, as nearly as may be.
Make what is absolutely new — I can't,
Mar what is made already well enough —
I won't: but turn to best account the thing
That 's half-made — that I can. Two blots, you saw
I knew how to extend into a line
Symmetric on the sheet they blurred before —
Such little act sufficed, this time, such thought.

Now, we 'll extend rays, widen out the verge,
Describe a larger circle; leave this first
Clod of an instance we began with. rise
To the complete world many clods effect.
Only continue patient while I throw,
Delver-like, spadeful after spadeful up,
Just as truths come, the subsoil of me, mould
Whence spring my moods: your object, — just to find,
Alike from handlift and from barrow-load,
What salts and silts may constitute the earth —
If it be proper stuff to blow man glass,
Or bake him pottery, bear him oaks or wheat —
What 's born of me, in brief; which found, all 's known.
If it were genius did the digging-job,
Logic would speedily sift its product smooth
And leave the crude truths bare for poetry;
But I 'm no poet, and am stiff i' the back.
What one spread fails to bring, another may.
In goes the shovel and out comes scoop — as here!

I live to please myself. I recognize
Power passing mine, immeasurable, God —

Above me, whom He made, as heaven beyond
Earth — to use figures which assist our sense.
I know that He is there as I am here,
By the same proof, which seems no proof at all,
It so exceeds familiar forms of proof.
Why "there," not "here"? Because, when I say
"there,"
I treat the feeling with distincter shape
That space exists between us: I, — not He, —
Live, think, do human work here — no machine,
His will moves, but a being by myself,
His, and not He who made me for a work,
Watches my working, judges its effect,
But does not interpose. He did so once,
And probably will again some time — not now,
Life being the minute of mankind, not God's,
In a certain sense, like time before and time
After man's earthly life, so far as man
Needs apprehend the matter. Am I clear?
Suppose I bid a courier take to-night
(. . . Once for all, let me talk as if I smoked
Yet in the Residenz, a personage:
I must still represent the thing I was,
Galvanically make dead muscle play,
Or how shall I illustrate muscle's use?)
I could then, last July, bid courier take
Message for me, post-haste, a thousand miles.
I bid him, since I have the right to bid,
And, my part done so far, his part begins;
He starts with due equipment, will and power,
Means he may use, misuse, not use at all,
At his discretion, at his peril too.
I leave him to himself: but, journey done,
I count the minutes, call for the result

In quickness and the courier quality,
Weigh its worth, and then punish or reward
According to proved service ; not before.
Meantime, he sleeps through noontide, rides till dawn,
Sticks to the straight road, tries the crooked path,
Measures and manages resource, trusts, doubts
Advisers by the wayside, does his best
At his discretion, lags or launches forth,
(He knows and I know) at his peril too.
You see ? Exactly thus men stand to God :
I with my courier, God with me. Just so
I have His bidding to perform ; but mind
And body, all of me, though made and meant
For that sole service, must consult, concert
With my own self and nobody beside,
How to effect the same : God helps not else.
'T is I who, with my stock of craft and strength,
Choose the directer cut across the hedge,
Or keep the foot-track that respects a crop.
Lie down and rest, rise up and run, — live spare,
Feed free, — all that 's my business : but, arrive,
Deliver message, bring the answer back,
And make my bow, I must : then God will speak,
Praise me or haply blame as service proves.
To other men, to each and every one,
Another law ! what likelier ? God, perchance,
Grants each new man, by some as new a mode,
Intercommunication with Himself,
Wreaking on finiteness infinitude ;
By such a series of effects, gives each
Last His own imprint : old yet ever new
The process : 't is the way of Deity.
How it succeeds, He knows : I only know

That varied modes of creatureship abound,
Implying just as varied intercourse
For each with the creator of them all.
Each has his own mind and no other's mode.
What mode may yours be? I shall sympathize!
No doubt, you, good young lady that you are,
Despite a natural naughtiness or two,
Turn eyes up like a Pradier Magdalen
And see an outspread providential hand
Above the owl's-wing aigrette — guard and guide
Visibly o'er your path, about your bed,
Through all your practisings with London-town.
It points, you go; it stays fixed, and you stop;
You quicken its procedure by a word
Spoken, a thought in silence, prayer and praise.
Well, I believe that such a hand may stoop,
And such appeals to it may stave off harm,
Pacify the grim guardian of this Square,
And stand you in good stead on quarter-day:
Quite possible in your case; not in mine.
"Ah, but I choose to make the difference,
Find the emancipation?" No, I hope!
If I deceive myself, take noon for night,
Please to become determinedly blind
To the true ordinance of human life,
Through mere presumption — that is my affair,
And truly a grave one; but as grave I think
Your affair, yours, the specially observed, —
Each favored person that perceives his path
Pointed him, inch by inch, and looks above
For guidance, through the mazes of this world,
In what we call its meanest life-career
— Not how to manage Europe properly,
But how keep open shop, and yet pay rent,

Rear household, and make both ends meet, the same.
I say, such man is no less tasked than I
To duly take the path appointed him
By whatsoever sign he recognize.
Our insincerity on both our heads!
No matter what the object of a life,
Small work or large, — the making thrive a shop,
Or seeing that an empire take no harm, —
There are known fruits to judge obedience by.
You 've read a ton's weight, now, of newspaper —
Lives of me, gabble about the kind of prince —
You know my work i' the rough ; I ask you, then,
Do I appear subordinated less
To hand-impulsion, one prime push for all,
Than little lives of men, the multitude
That cried out, every quarter of an hour,
For fresh instructions, did or did not work,
And praised in the odd minutes ?

Eh, my dear ?
Such is the reason why I acquiesced
In doing what seemed best for me to do,
So as to please myself on the great scale,
Having regard to immortality
No less than life — did that which head and heart
Prescribed my hand, in measure with its means
Of doing — used my special stock of power —
Not from the aforesaid head and heart alone,
But every sort of helpful circumstance,
Some problematic and some nondescript :
All regulated by the single care
I' the last resort — that I made thoroughly serve
The when and how, toiled where was need, reposed
As resolutely at the proper point,

Braved sorrow, courted joy, to just one end:
Namely, that just the creature I was bound
To be, I should become, nor thwart at all
God's purpose in creation. I conceive
No other duty possible to man, —
Highest mind, lowest mind, no other law
By which to judge life failure or success:
What folk call being saved or cast away.

Such was my rule of life: I worked my best
Subject to ultimate judgment, God's not man's.
Well then, this settled, — take your tea, I beg,
And meditate the fact, 'twixt sip and sip, —
This settled — why I pleased myself, you saw,
By turning blot and blot into a line,
O' the little scale, — we 'll try now (as your tongue
Tries the concluding sugar-drop) what's meant
To please me most o' the great scale. Why, just now
With nothing else to do within my reach,
Did I prefer making two blots one line
To making yet another separate
Third blot, and leaving those I found unlinked?
It meant, I like to use the thing I find,
Rather than strive at unfound novelty:
I make the best of the old, nor try for new.
Such will to act, such choice of action's way,
Constitute — when at work on the great scale,
Driven to their farthest natural consequence
By all the help from all the means — my own
Particular faculty of serving God,
Instinct for putting power to exercise
Upon some wish and want o' the time, I prove
Possible to mankind as best I may.
This constitutes my mission, — grant the phrase, —

Namely, to rule men — men within my reach.
To order, influence and dispose them so
As render solid and stability
Mankind in particles, the light and loose,
For their good and my pleasure in the act.
Such good accomplished proves twice good to me —
Good for its own sake, as the just and right,
And, in the effecting also, good again
To me its agent, tasked as suits my taste.

Is this much easy to be understood
At first glance? Now begin the steady gaze!

My rank — (if I must tell you simple truth —
Telling were else not worth the whiff o' the weed
I lose for the tale's sake) — dear, my rank i' the world
Is hard to know and name precisely: err
I may, but scarcely over-estimate
My style and title. Do I class with men
Most useful to their fellows? Possibly, —
Therefore, in some sort, best; but, greatest mind
And rarest nature? Evidently no.
A conservator, call me, if you please,
Not a creator nor destroyer: one
Who keeps the world safe. I profess to trace
The broken circle of society,
Dim actual order, I can redescribe
Not only where some segment silver-true
Stays clear, but where the breaks of black commence
Baffling you all who want the eye to probe —
As I make out yon problematic thin
White paring of your thumb-nail outside there,
Above the plaster-monarch on his steed —

See an inch, name an ell, and prophesy
O' the rest that ought to follow, the round moon
Now hiding in the night of things: that round,
I labor to demonstrate moon enough
For the month's purpose, — that society,
Render efficient for the age's need:
Preserving you in either case the old,
Nor aiming at a new and greater thing,
A sun for moon, a future to be made
By first abolishing the present law:
No such proud task for me by any means!
History shows you men whose master-touch
Not so much modifies as makes anew:
Minds that transmute nor need restore at all.
A breath of God made manifest in flesh
Subjects the world to change, from time to time,
Alters the whole conditions of our race
Abruptly, not by unperceived degrees
Nor play of elements already there,
But quite new leaven, leavening the lump,
And liker, so, the natural process. See!
Where winter reigned for ages — by a turn
I' the time, some star-change, (ask geologists)
The ice-tracts split, clash, splinter and disperse,
And there 's an end of immobility,
Silence, and all that tinted pageant, base
To pinnacle, one flush from fairyland
Dead-asleep and deserted somewhere, — see! —
As a fresh sun, wave, spring and joy outburst.
Or else the earth it is, time starts from trance,
Her mountains tremble into fire, her plains
Heave blinded by confusion: what result?
New teeming growth, surprises of strange life
Impossible before, a world broke up

And re-made, order gained by law destroyed.
Not otherwise, in our society
Follow like portents, all as absolute
Regenerations: they have birth at rare
Uncertain unexpected intervals
O' the world, by ministry impossible
Before and after fulness of the days:
Some dervish desert-spectre, swordsman, saint,
Law-giver, lyrist, — oh, we know the names!
Quite other these than I. Our time requires
No such strange potentate, — who else would dawn, —
No fresh force till the old have spent itself.
Such seems the natural œconomy.
To shoot a beam into the dark, assists:
To make that beam do fuller service, spread
And utilize such bounty to the height,
That assists also, — and that work is mine.
I recognize, contemplate, and approve
The general compact of society,
Not simply as I see effected good,
But good i' the germ, each chance that's possible
I' the plan traced so far: all results, in short,
For better or worse of the operation due
To those exceptional natures, unlike mine,
Who, helping, thwarting, conscious, unaware,
Did somehow manage to so far describe
This diagram left ready to my hand,
Waiting my turn of trial. I see success,
See failure, see what makes or mars throughout.
How shall I else but help complete this plan
Of which I know the purpose and approve,
By letting stay therein what seems to stand,
And adding good thereto of easier reach
To-day than yesterday?

So much, no more!
Whereon, "No more than that?" — inquire aggrieved
Half of my critics: "Nothing new at all?
The old plan saved, instead of a sponged slate
And fresh-drawn figure?" — while, "So much as that?"
Object their fellows of the other faith:
"Leave uneffaced the crazy labyrinth
Of alteration and amendment, lines
Which every dabster felt in duty bound
To signalize his power of pen and ink
By adding to a plan once plain enough?
Why keep each fool's bequeathment, scratch and blur
Which overscrawl and underscore the piece —
Nay, strengthen them by touches of your own?"

Well, that's my mission, so I serve the world,
Figure as man o' the moment, — in default
Of somebody inspired to strike such change
Into society — from round to square,
The ellipsis to the rhomboid, how you please,
As suits the size and shape o' the world he finds.
But this I can, — and nobody my peer, —
Do the best with the least change possible:
Carry the incompleteness on, a stage,
Make what was crooked straight, and roughness smooth,
And weakness strong: wherein if I succeed,
It will not prove the worst achievement, sure,
In the eyes at least of one man, one I look
Nowise to catch in critic company:
To-wit, the man inspired, the genius' self
Destined to come and change things thoroughly.

He, at least, finds his business simplified,
Distinguishes the done from undone, reads
Plainly what meant and did not mean this time
We live in, and I work on, and transmit
To such successor: he will operate
On good hard substance, not mere shade and shine.
Let all my critics, born to idleness
And impotency, get their good, and have
Their hooting at the giver: I am deaf —
Who find great good in this society,
Great gain, the purchase of great labor. Touch
The work I may and must, but — reverent
In every fall o' the finger-tip, no doubt.
Perhaps I find all good there 's warrant for
I' the world as yet: nay, to the end of time, —
Since evil never means part company
With mankind, only shift side and change shape.
I find advance i' the main, and notably
The Present an improvement on the Past,
And promise for the Future — which shall prove
Only the Present with its rough made smooth,
Its indistinctness emphasized; I hope
No better, nothing newer for mankind,
But something equably smoothed everywhere,
Good, reconciled with hardly-quite-as-good,
Instead of good and bad each jostling each.
"And that 's all?" Ay, and quite enough for me!
We have toiled so long to gain what gain I find
I' the Present, — let us keep it! We shall toil
So long before we gain — if gain God grant —
A Future with one touch of difference
I' the heart of things, and not their outside face, —
Let us not risk the whiff of my cigar
For Fourier, Comte, and all that ends in smoke!

This I see clearest probably of men
With power to act and influence, now alive :
Juster than they to the true state of things ;
In consequence, more tolerant that, side
By side, shall co-exist and thrive alike
In the age, the various sorts of happiness
Moral, mark ! — not material — moods o' the mind
Suited to man and man his opposite :
Say, minor modes of movement — hence to there,
Or thence to here, or simply round about —
So long as each toe spares its neighbor's kibe,
Nor spoils the major march and main advance.
The love of peace, care for the family,
Contentment with what 's bad but might be worse —
Good movements these ! and good, too, discontent,
So long as that spurs good, which might be best,
Into becoming better, anyhow :
Good — pride of country, putting hearth and home
I' the back-ground, out of undue prominence :
Good — yearning after change, strife, victory,
And triumph. Each shall have its orbit marked,
But no more, — none impede the other's path
In this wide world, — though each and all alike,
Save for me, fain would spread itself through space
And leave its fellow not an inch of way.
I rule and regulate the course, excite,
Restrain : because the whole machine should march
Impelled by those diversely-moving parts,
Each blind to aught beside its little bent.
Out of the turnings round and round inside,
Comes that straightforward world-advance I want,
And none of them supposes God wants too
And gets through just their hindrance and my help.
I think that to have held the balance straight

For twenty years, say, weighing claim and claim,
And giving each its due, no less no more,
This was good service to humanity,
Right usage of my power in head and heart,
And reasonable piety beside.
Keep those three points in mind while judging me!
You stand, perhaps, for some one man, not men, —
Represent this or the other interest,
Nor mind the general welfare, — so, impugn
My practice and dispute my value: why?
You man of faith, I did not tread the world
Into a paste, and thereof make a smooth
Uniform mound whereon to plant your flag,
The lily-white, above the blood and brains!
Nor yet did I, you man of faithlessness,
So roll things to the level which you love,
That you could stand at ease there and survey
The universal Nothing undisgraced
By pert obtrusion of some old church-spire
I' the distance! Neither friend would I content,
Nor, as the world were simply meant for him,
Thrust out his fellow and mend God's mistake.
Why, you two fools, — my dear friends all the same, —
Is it some change o' the world and nothing else
Contents you? Should whatever was, not be?
How thanklessly you view things! There 's the root
Of the evil, source of the entire mistake:
You see no worth i' the world, nature and life,
Unless we change what is to what may be,
Which means, — may be, i' the brain of one of you!
"Reject what is?" — all capabilities —
Nay, you may style them chances if you choose —
All chances, then, of happiness that lie
Open to anybody that is born,

Tumbles into this life and out again, —
All that may happen, good and evil too,
I' the space between, to each adventurer
Upon this 'sixty, Anno Domini:
A life to live — and such a life! a world
To learn, one's lifetime in, — and such a world!
How did the foolish ever pass for wise
By calling life a burden, man a fly
Or worm or what 's most insignificant?
"O littleness of man!" deplores the bard;
And then, for fear the Powers should punish him,
"O grandeur of the visible universe
Our human littleness contrasts withal!
O sun, O moon, ye mountains and thou sea,
Thou emblem of immensity, thou this,
That, and the other, — what impertinence
In man to eat and drink and walk about
And have his little notions of his own,
The while some wave sheds foam upon the shore!"
First of all, 't is a lie some three-times thick:
The bard, — this sort of speech being poetry, —
The bard puts mankind well outside himself
And then begins instructing them: "This way
I and my friend the sea conceive of you!
What would you give to think such thoughts as ours
Of you and the sea together?" Down they go
On the humbled knees of them: at once they draw
Distinction, recognize no mate of theirs
In one, despite his mock humility,
So plain a match for what he plays with. Next,
The turn of the great ocean-playfellow,
When the bard, leaving Bond Street very far
From ear-shot, cares not to ventriloquize,
But tells the sea its home-truths: "You, my match?

You, all this terror and immensity
And what not? Shall I tell you what you are?
Just fit to hitch into a stanza, so
Wake up and set in motion who 's asleep
O' the other side of you in England, else
Unaware, as folk pace their Bond Street now,
Somebody here despises them so much!
Between us, — they are the ultimate! to them
And their perception go these lordly thoughts:
Since what were ocean — mane and tail, to boot —
Mused I not here, how make thoughts thinkable?
Start forth my stanza and astound the world!
Back, billows, to your insignificance!
Deep, you are done with!"

Learn, my gifted friend,
There are two things i' the world, still wiser folk
Accept — intelligence and sympathy.
You pant about unutterable power
I' the ocean, all you feel but cannot speak?
Why, that 's the plainest speech about it all.
You did not feel what was not to be felt.
Well, then, all else but what man feels is naught —
The wash o' the liquor that o'erbrims the cup
Called man, and runs to waste adown his side,
Perhaps to feed a cataract, — who cares?
I 'll tell you: all the more I know mankind,
The more I thank God, like my grandmother,
For making me a little lower than
The angels, honor-clothed and glory-crowned:
This is the honor, — that no thing I know,
Feel or conceive, but I can make my own
Somehow, by use of hand or head or heart:
This is the glory, — that in all conceived,

Or felt or known, I recognize a mind
Not mine but like mine, — for the double joy, —
Making all things for me and me for Him.
There 's folly for you at this time of day !
So think it ! and enjoy your ignorance
Of what — no matter for the worthy's name —
Wisdom set working in a noble heart,
When he, who was earth's best geometer
Up to that time of day, consigned his life
With its results into one matchless book,
The triumph of the human mind so far,
All in geometry man yet could do :
And then wrote on the dedication-page
In place of name the universe applauds,
" But, God, what a geometer art Thou ! "
I suppose Heaven is, through Eternity,
The equalizing, ever and anon,
In momentary rapture, great with small,
Omniscience with intelligency, God
With man, — the thunder-glow from pole to pole
Abolishing, a blissful moment-space,
Great cloud alike and small cloud, in one fire —
As sure to ebb as sure again to flow
When the new receptivity deserves
The new completion. There 's the Heaven for me.
And I say, therefore, to live out one's life
I' the world here, with the chance, — whether by pain
Or pleasure be the process, long or short
The time, august or mean the circumstance
To human eye, — of learning how set foot
Decidedly on some one path to Heaven,
Touch segment in the circle whence all lines
Lead to the centre equally, red lines
Or black lines, so they but produce themselves —

This, I do say, — and here my sermon ends, —
This makes it worth our while to tenderly
Handle a state of things which mend we might,
Mar we may, but which meanwhile helps so far.
Therefore my end is — save society !

"And that's all?" twangs the never-failing taunt
O' the foe — "No novelty, creativeness,
Mark of the master that renews the age?"
"Nay, all that?" rather will demur my judge
I look to hear some day, nor friend nor foe —
"Did you attain, then, to perceive that God
Knew what He undertook when He made things?"
Ay: that my task was to co-operate
Rather than play the rival, chop and change
The order whence comes all the good we know,
With this, — good's last expression to our sense, —
That there's a further good conceivable
Beyond the utmost earth can realize:
And, therefore, that to change the agency,
The evil whereby good is brought about —
Try to make good do good as evil does —
Were just as if a chemist, wanting white,
And knowing black ingredients bred the dye,
Insisted these too should be white forsooth !
Correct the evil, mitigate your best,
Blend mild with harsh, and soften black to gray
If gray may follow with no detriment
To the eventual perfect purity !
But as for hazarding the main result
By hoping to anticipate one half
In the intermediate process, — no, my friends !
This bad world, I experience and approve;
Your good world, — with no pity, courage, hope,

Fear, sorrow, joy, — devotedness, in short,
Which I account the ultimate of man,
Of which there 's not one day nor hour but brings,
In flower or fruit, some sample of success,
Out of this same society I save —
None of it for me! That I might have none,
I rapped your tampering knuckles twenty years.
Such was the task imposed me, such my end.

Now for the means thereto. Ah, confidence —
Keep we together or part company?
This is the critical minute! "Such my end?"
Certainly; how could it be otherwise?
Can there be question which was the right task —
To save or to destroy society?
Why, even prove that, by some miracle,
Destruction were the proper work to choose,
And that a torch best remedies what 's wrong
I' the temple, whence the long procession wound
Of powers and beauties, earth's achievements all,
The human strength that strove and overthrew, —
The human love that, weak itself, crowned strength, —
The instinct crying "God is whence I came!" —
The reason laying down the law "And such
His will i' the world must be!" — the leap and shout
Of genius "For I hold His very thoughts,
The meaning of the mind of Him!" — nay, more,
The ingenuities, each active force
That turning in a circle on itself
Looks neither up nor down but keeps the spot,
Mere creature-like, and, for religion, works,
Works only and works ever, makes and shapes
And changes, still wrings more of good from less,
Still stamps some bad out, where was worst before.

So leaves the handiwork, the act and deed,
Were it but house and land and wealth, to show
Here was a creature perfect in the kind —
Whether as bee, beaver, or behemoth,
What's the importance? he has done his work
For work's sake, worked well, earned a creature's praise; —
I say, concede that same fane, whence deploys
Age after age, all this humanity,
Diverse but ever dear, out of the dark
Behind the altar into the broad day
By the portal — enter, and, concede there mocks
Each lover of free motion and much space
A perplexed length of apse and aisle and nave, —
Pillared roof and carved screen, and what care I? —
Which irk the movement and impede the march, —
Nay, possibly, bring flat upon his nose
At some odd break-neck angle, by some freak
Of old-world artistry, that personage
Who, could he but have kept his skirts from grief
And catching at the hooks and crooks about,
Had stepped out on the daylight of our time
Plainly the man of the age, — still, still, I bar
Excessive conflagration in the case.
"Shake the flame freely!" shout the multitude:
The architect approves I stuck my torch
Inside a good stout lantern, hung its light
Above the hooks and crooks, and ended so.
To save society was well: the means
Whereby to save it, — there begins the doubt
Permitted you, imperative on me;
Were mine the best means? Did I work aright
With powers appointed me? — since powers denied
Concern me nothing.

Well, my work reviewed
Fairly, leaves more hope than discouragement.
First, there 's the deed done: what I found, I leave, —
What tottered, I kept stable: if it stand
One month, without sustainment, still thank me
The twenty years' sustainer! Now, observe,
Sustaining is no brilliant self-display
Like knocking down or even setting up:
Much bustle these necessitate; and still
To vulgar eye, the mightier of the myth
Is Hercules, who substitutes his own
For Atlas' shoulder and supports the globe
A whole day, — not the passive and obscure
Atlas who bore, ere Hercules was born,
And is to go on bearing that same load
When Hercules turns ash on Œta's top.
'T is the transition-stage, the tug and strain,
That strike men: standing still is stupid-like.
My pressure was too constant on the whole
For any part's eruption into space
Mid sparkles, crackling, and much praise of me.
I saw that, in the ordinary life,
Many of the little make a mass of men
Important beyond greatness here and there;
As certainly as, in life exceptional,
When old things terminate and new commence,
A solitary great man 's worth the world.
God takes the business into His own hands
At such time: who creates the novel flower
Contrives to guard and give it breathing-room:
I merely tend the corn-field, care for crop,
And weed no acre thin to let emerge
What prodigy may stifle there perchance

— No, though my eye have noted where he lurks.
Oh those mute myriads that spoke loud to me —
The eyes that craved to see the light, the mouths
That sought the daily bread and nothing more,
The hands that supplicated exercise,
Men that had wives, and women that had babes,
And all these making suit to only live!
Was I to turn aside from husbandry,
Leave hope of harvest for the corn, my care,
To play at horticulture, rear some rose
Or poppy into perfect leaf and bloom
When, mid the furrows, up was pleased to sprout
Some man, cause, system, special interest
I ought to study, stop the world meanwhile?
"But I am Liberty, Philanthropy,
Enlightenment, or Patriotism, the power
Whereby you are to stand or fall!" cries each:
"Mine and mine only be the flag you flaunt!"
And, when I venture to object "Meantime,
What of yon myriads with no flag at all —
My crop which, who flaunts flag must tread across?"
"Now, this it is to have a puny mind!"
Admire my mental prodigies: "down — down —
Ever at home o' the level and the low,
There bides he brooding! Could he look above,
With less of the owl and more of the eagle eye,
He 'd see there 's no way helps the little cause
Like the attainment of the great. Dare first
The chief emprize; dispel yon cloud between
The sun and us; nor fear that, though our heads
Find earlier warmth and comfort from his ray,
What lies about our feet, the multitude,
Will fail of benefaction presently.

Come now, let each of us awhile cry truce
To special interests, make common cause
Against the adversary — or perchance
Mere dullard to his own plain interest!
Which of us will you choose? — since needs must be
Some one o' the warring causes you incline
To hold, i' the main, has right and should prevail:
Why not adopt and give it prevalence?
Choose strict Faith or lax Incredulity, —
King, Caste and Cultus — or the Rights of Man,
Sovereignty of each Proudhon o'er himself,
And all that follows in just consequence!
Go free the stranger from a foreign yoke;
Or stay, concentrate energy at home;
Succeed! — when he deserves, the stranger will.
Comply with the Great Nation's impulse, print
By force of arms, — since reason pleads in vain,
And, mid the sweet compulsion, pity weeps, —
Hohenstiel-Schwangau on the universe!
Snub the Great Nation, cure the impulsive itch
With smartest fillip on a restless nose
Was ever launched by thumb and finger! Bid
Hohenstiel-Schwangau first repeal the tax
On pig-tails and pomatum, and then mind
Abstruser matters for next century!
Is your choice made? Why then, act up to choice!
Leave the illogical touch now here now there
I' the way of work, the tantalizing help
First to this, then the other opposite:
The blowing hot and cold, sham policy,
Sure ague of the mind and nothing more,
Disease of the perception or the will,
That fain would hide in a fine name! Your choice,
Speak it out and condemn yourself thereby!"

Well, Leicester-square is not the Residenz:
Instead of shrugging shoulder, turning friend
The deaf ear, with a wink to the police —
I 'll answer — by a question, wisdom's mode.
How many years, o' the average, do men
Live in this world? Some score, say computists.
Quintuple me that term and give mankind
The likely hundred, and with all my heart
I 'll take your task upon me, work your way,
Concentrate energy on some one cause:
Since, counseller, I also have my cause,
My flag, my faith in its effect, my hope
In its eventual triumph for the good
O' the world. And once upon a time, when I
Was like all you, mere voice and nothing more,
Myself took wings, soared sunward, and thence sang
"Look where I live i' the loft, come up to me,
Groundlings, nor grovel longer! gain this height,
And prove you breathe here better than below!
Why, what emancipation far and wide
Will follow in a trice! They too can soar,
Each tenant of the earth's circumference
Claiming to elevate humanity,
They also must attain such altitude,
Live in the luminous circle that surrounds
The planet, not the leaden orb itself.
Press out, each point, from surface to yon verge
Which one has gained and guaranteed your realm!"
Ay, still my fragments wander, music-fraught,
Sighs of the soul, mine once, mine now, and mine
Forever! Crumbled arch, crushed aqueduct,
Alive with tremors in the shaggy growth
Of wild-wood, crevice-sown, that triumphs there
Imparting exultation to the hills!

Sweep of the swathe when only the winds walk
And waft my words above the grassy sea
Under the blinding blue that basks o'er Rome, —
Hear ye not still — "Be Italy again"?
And ye, what strikes the panic to your heart?
Decrepit council-chambers, — where some lamp
Drives the unbroken black three paces off
From where the graybeards huddle in debate,
Dim cowls and capes, and midmost glimmers one
Like tarnished gold, and what they say is doubt,
And what they think is fear, and what suspends
The breath in them is not the plaster-patch
Time disengages from the painted wall
Where Rafael moulderingly bids adieu,
Nor tick of the insect turning tapestry
Which a queen's finger traced of old, to dust;
But some word, resonant, redoubtable,
Of who once felt upon his head a hand
Whereof the head now apprehends his foot.
"Light in Rome, Law in Rome, and Liberty
O' the soul in Rome — the free Church, the free State!
Stamp out the nature that 's best typified
By its embodiment in Peter's Dome,
The scorpion-body with the greedy pair
Of outstretched nippers, either colonnade
Agape for the advance of heads and hearts!"
There 's one cause for you! one and only one,
For I am vocal through the universe,
I' the workshop, manufactory, exchange
And market-place, sea-port and custom-house
O' the frontier: listen if the echoes die —
"Unfettered commerce! Power to speak and hear,
And print and read! The universal vote!

Its rights for labor!" This, with much beside,
I spoke when I was voice and nothing more,
But altogether such an one as you
My censors. "Voice, and nothing more, indeed!"
Re-echoes round me: "that's the censure, there's
Involved the ruin of you soon or late!
Voice, — when its promise beat the empty air:
And nothing more, — when solid earth's your stage,
And we desiderate performance, deed
For word, the realizing all you dreamed
In the old days: now, for deed, we find at door
O' the council-chamber posted, mute as mouse,
Hohenstiel-Schwangau, sentry and safeguard
O' the graybeards all a-chuckle, cowl to cape,
Who challenge Judas, — that's endearment's style,—
To stop their mouths or let escape grimace,
While they keep cursing Italy and him.
The power to speak, hear, print and read is ours? 890
Ay, we learn where and how, when clapped inside
A convict-transport bound for cool Cayenne!
The universal vote we have: its urn,
We also have where votes drop, fingered-o'er
By the universal Prefect. Say, Trade's free
And Toil turned master out o' the slave it was:
What then? These feed man's stomach, but his soul
Craves finer fare, nor lives by bread alone,
As somebody says somewhere. Hence you stand
Proved and recorded either false or weak, 900
Faulty in promise or performance: which?"
Neither, I hope. Once pedestalled on earth,
To act not speak, I found earth was not air.
I saw that multitude of mine, and not
The nakedness and nullity of air
Fit only for a voice to float in free.

Such eyes I saw that craved the light alone,
Such mouths that wanted bread and nothing else,
Such hands that supplicated handiwork,
Men with the wives, and women with the babes,
Yet all these pleading just to live, not die!
Did I believe one whit less in belief,
Take truth for falsehood, wish the voice revoked
That told the truth to heaven for earth to hear?
No, this should be, and shall; but when and how?
At what expense to these who average
Your twenty years of life, my computists?
"Not bread alone" but bread before all else
For these: the bodily want serve first, said I;
If earth-space and the life-time help not here,
Where is the good of body having been?
But, helping body, if we somewhat balk
The soul of finer fare, such food 's to find
Elsewhere and afterward — all indicates,
Even this self-same fact that soul can starve
Yet body still exist its twenty years:
While, stint the body, there 's an end at once
O' the revel in the fancy that Rome 's free,
And superstition 's fettered, and one prints
Whate'er one pleases and who pleases reads
The same, and speaks out and is spoken to,
And divers hundred thousand fools may vote
A vote untampered with by one wise man,
And so elect Barabbas deputy
In lieu of his concurrent. I who trace
The purpose written on the face of things,
For my behoof and guidance — (whoso needs
No such sustainment, sees beneath my signs,
Proves, what I take for writing, penmanship,
Scribble and flourish with no sense for me

O' the sort I solemnly go spelling out, —
Let him ! there 's certain work of mine to show
Alongside his work : which gives warranty
Of shrewder vision in the workman — judge !)
I who trace Providence without a break
I' the plan of things, drop plumb on this plain print
Of an intention with a view to good,
That man is made in sympathy with man
At outset of existence, so to speak;
But in dissociation, more and more,
Man from his fellow, as their lives advance
In culture ; still humanity, that 's born
A mass, keeps flying off, fining away
Ever into a multitude of points,
And ends in isolation, each from each :
Peerless above i' the sky, the pinnacle, —
Absolute contact, fusion, all below
At the base of being. How comes this about?
This stamp of God characterizing man
And nothing else but man in the universe —
That, while he feels with man (to use man's speech)
I' the little things of life, its fleshly wants
Of food and rest and health and happiness,
Its simplest spirit-motions, loves and hates,
Hopes, fears, soul-cravings on the ignoblest scale,
O' the fellow-creature, — owns the bond at base, —
He tends to freedom and divergency
In the upward progress, plays the pinnacle
When life 's at greatest (grant again the phrase !
Because there 's neither great nor small in life).
" Consult thou for thy kind that have the eyes
To see, the mouths to eat, the hands to work,
Men with the wives, and women with the babes ! "
Prompts Nature. " Care thou for thyself alone

I' the conduct of the mind God made thee with !
Think, as if man had never thought before !
Act, as if all creation hung attent
On the acting of such faculty as thine,
To take prime pattern from thy masterpiece ! "
Nature prompts also : neither law obeyed
To the uttermost by any heart and soul
We know or have in record : both of them
Acknowledged blindly by whatever man
We ever knew or heard of in this world.
" Will you have why and wherefore, and the fact
Made plain as pikestaff ? " modern Science asks.
" That mass man sprung from was a jelly-lump
Once on a time ; he kept an after course
Through fish and insect, reptile, bird and beast,
Till he attained to be an ape at last
Or last but one. And if this doctrine shock
In aught the natural pride " . . . Friend, banish fear,
The natural humility replies !
Do you suppose, even I, poor potentate,
Hohenstiel-Schwangau, who once ruled the roast, —
I was born able at all points to ply
My tools ? or did I have to learn my trade,
Practise as exile ere perform as prince ?
The world knows something of my ups and downs :
But grant me time, give me the management
And manufacture of a model me,
Me fifty-fold, a prince without a flaw, —
Why, there 's no social grade, the sordidest,
My embryo potentate should blink and scape.
King, all the better he was cobbler once,
He should know, sitting on the throne, how tastes

Life to who sweeps the doorway. But life 's hard,
Occasion rare ; you cut probation short,
And, being half-instructed, on the stage
You shuffle through your part as best you can,
And bless your stars, as I do. God takes time.
I like the thought He should have lodged me once
I' the hole, the cave, the hut, the tenement,
The mansion and the palace ; made me learn
The feel o' the first, before I found myself
Loftier i' the last, not more emancipate ;
From first to last of lodging, I was I,
And not at all the place that harbored me.
Do I refuse to follow farther yet
I' the backwardness, repine if tree and flower,
Mountain or streamlet were my dwelling-place
Before I gained enlargement, grew mollusk?
As well account that way for many a thrill
Of kinship, I confess to, with the powers
Called Nature : animate, inanimate,
In parts or in the whole, there 's something there
Man-like that somehow meets the man in me.
My pulse goes altogether with the heart
O' the Persian, that old Xerxes, when he stayed
His march to conquest of the world, a day
I' the desert, for the sake of one superb
Plane-tree which queened it there in solitude :
Giving her neck its necklace, and each arm
Its armlet, suiting soft waist, snowy side,
With cincture and apparel. Yes, I lodged
In those successive tenements ; perchance
Taste yet the straitness of them while I stretch
Limb and enjoy new liberty the more.
And some abodes are lost or ruinous ;
Some, patched-up and pieced-out, and so transformed

They still accommodate the traveller
His day of lifetime. O you count the links,
Descry no bar of the unbroken man ?
Yes, — and who welds a lump of ore, suppose
He likes to make a chain and not a bar,
And reach by link on link, link small, link large,
Out to the due length — why, there 's forethought still
Outside o' the series, forging at one end,
While at the other there 's — no matter what
The kind of critical intelligence
Believing that last link had last but one
For parent, and no link was, first of all,
Fitted to anvil, hammered into shape.
Else, I accept the doctrine, and deduce
This duty, that I recognize mankind,
In all its height and depth and length and breadth.
Mankind i' the main have little wants, not large :
I, being of will and power to help, i' the main,
Mankind, must help the least wants first. My friend,
That is, my foe, without such power and will,
May plausibly concentrate all he wields,
And do his best at helping some large want,
Exceptionally noble cause, that 's seen
Subordinate enough from where I stand.
As he helps, I helped once, when like himself,
Unable to help better, work more wide ;
And so would work with heart and hand to-day,
Did only computists confess a fault,
And multiply the single score by five,
Five only, give man's life its hundred years.
Change life, in me shall follow change to match !
Time were then, to work here, there, everywhere,
By turns and try experiment at ease !

Full time to mend as well as mar: why wait
The slow and sober uprise all around
O' the building? Let us run up, right to roof,
Some sudden marvel, piece of perfectness,
And testify what we intend the whole!
Is the world losing patience? "Wait!" say we:
"There 's time: no generation needs to die
Unsolaced; you 've a century in store!"
But, no: I sadly let the voices wing
Their way i' the upper vacancy, nor test
Truth on this solid as I promised once.
Well, and what is there to be sad about?
The world 's the world, life 's life, and nothing else.
'T is part of life, a property to prize,
That those o' the higher sort engaged i' the world,
Should fancy they can change its ill to good,
Wrong to right, ugliness to beauty: find
Enough success in fancy turning fact,
To keep the sanguine kind in countenance
And justify the hope that busies them:
Failure enough, — to who can follow change
Beyond their vision, see new good prove ill
I' the consequence, see blacks and whites of life
Shift square indeed, but leave the chequered face
Unchanged i' the main, — failure enough for such,
To bid ambition keep the whole from change,
As their best service. I hope naught beside.
No, my brave thinkers, whom I recognize,
Gladly, myself the first, as, in a sense,
All that our world 's worth, flower and fruit of man!
Such minds myself award supremacy
Over the common insignificance,
When only Mind 's in question, — Body bows
To quite another government, you know.

Be Kant crowned king o' the castle in the air!
Hans Slouch, — his own, and children's mouths to feed
I' the hovel on the ground, — wants meat, nor chews
"The Critique of Pure Reason" in exchange.
But, now, — suppose I could allow your claims
And quite change life to please you, — would it please?
Would life comport with change and still be life?
Ask, now, a doctor for a remedy:
There 's his prescription. Bid him point you out
Which of the five or six ingredients saves
The sick man. "Such the efficacity?
Then why not dare and do things in one dose
Simple and pure, all virtue, no alloy
Of the idle drop and powder?" What 's his word?
The efficacity, neat, were neutralized:
It wants dispersing and retarding, — nay
Is put upon its mettle, plays its part
Precisely through such hindrance everywhere,
Finds some mysterious give and take i' the case,
Some gain by opposition, he foregoes
Should he unfetter the medicament.
So with this thought of yours that fain would work
Free in the world: it wants just what it finds —
The ignorance, stupidity, the hate,
Envy and malice and uncharitableness
That bar your passage, break the flow of you
Down from those happy heights where many a cloud
Combined to give you birth and bid you be
The royalest of rivers: on you glide
Silverly till you reach the summit-edge,
Then over, on to all that ignorance,
Stupidity, hate, envy, bluffs and blocks,

Posted to fret you into foam and noise.
What of it ? Up you mount in minute mist,
And bridge the chasm that crushed your quietude,
A spirit-rainbow, earthborn jewelry
Outsparkling the insipid firmament
Blue above Terni and its orange-trees.
Do not mistake me ! You, too, have your rights !
Hans must not burn Kant's house above his head
Because he cannot understand Kant's book :
And still less must Hans' pastor burn Kant's self
Because Kant understands some books too well.
But, justice seen to on this little point,
Answer me, is it manly, is it sage
To stop and struggle with arrangements here
It took so many lives, so much of toil,
To tinker up into efficiency ?
Can't you contrive to operate at once, —
Since time is short and art is long, — to show
Your quality i' the world, whate'er you boast,
Without this fractious call on folks to crush
The world together just to set you free,
Admire the capers you will cut perchance,
Nor mind the mischief to your neighbors ?

"Age!
Age and experience bring discouragement,"
You taunt me : I maintain the opposite.
Am I discouraged who, — perceiving health,
Strength, beauty, as they tempt the eye of soul,
Are uncombinable with flesh and blood, —
Resolve to let my body live its best,
And leave my soul what better yet may be
Or not be, in this life or afterward ?
— In either fortune, wiser than who waits

Till magic art procure a miracle.
In virtue of my very confidence
Mankind ought to outgrow its babyhood,
I prescribe rocking, deprecate rough hands,
While thus the cradle holds it past mistake.
Indeed, my task 's the harder — equable
Sustainment everywhere, all strain, no push —
Whereby friends credit me with indolence,
Apathy, hesitation. "Stand stock-still
If able to move briskly? 'All a-strain' —
So must we compliment your passiveness?
Sound asleep, rather!"

Just the judgment passed
Upon a statue, luckless like myself,
I saw at Rome once! 'T was some artist's whim
To cover all the accessories close
I' the group, and leave you only Laocoön
With neither sons nor serpents to denote
The purpose of his gesture. Then a crowd
Was called to try the question, criticise
Wherefore such energy of legs and arms,
Nay, eyeballs, starting from the socket. One —
I give him leave to write my history —
Only one said "I think the gesture strives
Against some obstacle we cannot see"
All the rest made their minds up. "'T is a yawn
Of sheer fatigue subsiding to repose:
The statue's 'Somnolency' clear enough!"

There, my arch stranger-friend, my audience both
And arbitress, you have one half your wish,
At least: you know the thing I tried to do!
All, so far, to my praise and glory — all
Told as befits the self-apologist, —

Who ever promises a candid sweep
And clearance of those errors miscalled crimes
None knows more, none laments so much as he,
And ever rises from confession, proved
A god whose fault was — trying to be man.
Just so, fair judge, — if I read smile aright —
I condescend to figure in your eyes
As biggest heart and best of Europe's friends,
And hence my failure. God will estimate
Success one day; and, in the mean time — you!

I dare say there 's some fancy of the sort
Frolicking round this final puff I send
To die up yonder in the ceiling-rose, —
Some consolation-stakes, we losers win!
A plague of the return to "I — I — I
Did this, meant that, hoped, feared the other thing!"
Autobiography, adieu! The rest
Shall make amends, be pure blame, history
And falsehood: not the ineffective truth,
But Thiers-and-Victor-Hugo exercise.
Hear what I never was, but might have been
I' the better world where goes tobacco-smoke!
Here lie the dozen volumes of my life:
(Did I say "lie"? the pregnant word will serve).
Cut on to the concluding chapter, though!
Because the little hours begin to strike.
Hurry Thiers-Hugo to the labor's end!

Something like this the unwritten chapter reads

Exemplify the situation thus!
Hohenstiel-Schwangau, being, no dispute,

Absolute mistress, chose the Assembly, first,
To serve her: chose this man, its President
Afterward, to serve also, — specially
To see that folk did service one and all.
And now the proper term of years was out
When the Head-servant must vacate his place,
And nothing lay so patent to the world
As that his fellow-servants one and all
Were — mildly to make mention — knaves or fools,
Each of them with his promise flourished full
I' the face of you by word and impudence,
Or filtered slyly out by nod and wink
And nudge upon your sympathetic rib —
That not one minute more did knave or fool
Mean to keep faith and serve as he had sworn
Hohenstiel-Schwangau, once her Head away.
Why should such swear except to get the chance,
When time should ripen and confusion bloom,
Of putting Hohenstielers-Schwangauese
To the true use of human property —
Restoring souls and bodies, this to Pope,
And that to King, that other to his planned
Perfection of a Share-and-share-alike,
That other still, to Empire absolute
In shape of the Head-servant's very self
Transformed to Master whole and sole? each scheme
Discussible, concede one circumstance —
That each scheme's parent were, beside himself,
Hohenstiel-Schwangau, not her serving-man
Sworn to do service in the way she chose
Rather than his way: way superlative,
Only, — by some infatuation, — his
And his and his and every one's but hers
Who stuck to just the Assembly and the Head.

I make no doubt the Head, too, had his dream
Of doing sudden duty swift and sure
On all that heap of untrustworthiness —
Catching each vaunter of the villany
He meant to perpetrate when time was ripe,
Once the Head-servant fairly out of doors, —
And, caging here a knave and there a fool,
Cry "Mistress of your servants, these and me,
Hohenstiel-Schwangau! I, their trusty Head,
Pounce on a pretty scheme concocting here
That's stopped, extinguished by my vigilance.
Your property is safe again: but mark!
Safe in these hands, not yours, who lavish trust
Too lightly. Leave my hands their charge awhile!
I know your business better than yourself:
Let me alone about it! Some fine day,
Once we are rid of the embarrassment,
You shall look up and see your longings crowned!"
Such fancy might have tempted him be false,
But this man chose truth and was wiser so.
He recognized that for great minds i' the world
There is no trial like the appropriate one
Of leaving little minds their liberty
Of littleness to blunder on through life,
Now, aiming at right ends by foolish means,
Now, at absurd achievement through the aid
Of good and wise endeavor — to acquiesce
In folly's life-long privilege, though with power
To do the little minds the good they need,
Despite themselves, by just abolishing
Their right to play the part and fill the place
I' the scheme of things He schemed who made alike
Great minds and little minds, saw use for each.
Could the orb sweep those puny particles

It just half-lights at distance, hardly leads
I' the leash — sweep out each speck of them from space
They anticize in with their days and nights
And whirlings round and dancings off, forsooth,
And all that fruitless individual life
One cannot lend a beam to but they spoil —
Sweep them into itself and so, one star,
Preponderate henceforth i' the heritage
Of heaven! No! in less senatorial phrase,
The man endured to help, not save outright
The multitude by substituting him
For them, his knowledge, will and way, for God's:
Nor change the world, such as it is, and was
And will be, for some other, suiting all
Except the purpose of the maker. No!
He saw that weakness, wickedness will be,
And therefore should be: that the perfect man
As we account perfection — at most pure
O' the special gold, whate'er the form it take,
Head-work or heart-work, fined and thrice-refined
I' the crucible of life, whereto the powers
Of the refiner, one and all, are flung
To feed the flame, he saw that e'en the block
Such perfect man holds out triumphant, breaks
Into some poisonous ore, gold's opposite,
At the very purest, so compensating
Man's Adversary — what if we believe? —
For earlier stern exclusion of his stuff.
See the sage, with the hunger for the truth,
And see his system that's all true, except
The one weak place that's stanchioned by a lie!
The moralist who walks with head erect
I' the crystal clarity of air so long,

Until a stumble, and the man 's one mire!
Philanthropy undoes the social knot
With axe-edge, makes love room 'twixt head and trunk:
Religion — but, enough, the thing 's too clear!
Well, if these sparks break out i' the greenest tree,
Our topmost of performance, yours and mine,
What will be done i' the dry ineptitude
Of ordinary mankind, bark and bole,
All seems ashamed of but their mother-earth?
Therefore throughout Head's term of servitude
He did the appointed service, and forbore
Extraneous action that were duty else,
Done by some other servant, idle now
Or mischievous: no matter, each his own —
Own task, and, in the end, own praise or blame!
He suffered them strut, prate and brag their best,
Squabble at odds on every point save one,
And there shake hands, — agree to trifle time,
Obstruct advance with, each, his cricket-cry
"Wait till the Head be off the shoulders here!
Then comes my King, my Pope, my Autocrat,
My Socialist Republic to her own —
To-wit, that property of only me,
Hohenstiel-Schwangau who conceits herself
Free, forsooth, and expects I keep her so!"
— Nay, suffered when, perceiving with dismay
Head's silence paid no tribute to their noise,
They turned on him. "Dumb menace in that mouth,
Malice in that unstridulosity!
He cannot but intend some stroke of state
Shall signalize his passage into peace
Out of the creaking, — hinder transference
O' the Hohenstielers-Schwangauese to king,
Pope, autocrat, or socialist republic! That 's

Exact the cause his lips unlocked would cry !
Therefore be stirring : brave, beard, bully him !
Dock, by the million, of its friendly joints,
The electoral body short at once ! who did,
May do again, and undo us beside.
Wrest from his hands the sword for self-defence,
The right to parry any thrust in play
We peradventure please to meditate ! ”
And so forth ; creak, creak, creak : and ne’er a line
His locked mouth oped the wider, till at last
O’ the long degraded and insulting day,
Sudden the clock told it was judgment-time.
Then he addressed himself to speak indeed
To the fools, not knaves : they saw him walk straight down
Each step of the eminence, as he first engaged,
And stand at last o’ the level, — all he swore.
“ People, and not the people’s varletry,
This is the task you set myself and these !
Thus I performed my part of it, and thus
They thwarted me throughout, here, here, and here :
Study each instance ! yours the loss, not mine.
What they intend now is demonstrable
As plainly : here ’s such man, and here ’s such mode
Of making you some other than the thing
You, wisely or unwisely, choose to be,
And only set him up to keep you so.
Do you approve this ? Yours the loss, not mine.
Do you condemn it ? There ’s a remedy.
Take me — who know your mind, and mean your good,
With clearer brain and stouter arm than they,
Or you, or haply anybody else —
And make me master for the moment ! Choose

What time, what power you trust me with: I too
Will choose as frankly ere I trust myself
With time and power: they must be adequate
To the end and aim, since mine the loss, with
yours,
If means be wanting; once their worth approved,
Grant them, and I shall forthwith operate —
Ponder it well! — to the extremest stretch
O' the power you trust me: if with unsuccess,
God wills it, and there 's nobody to blame."

Whereon the people answered with a shout
"The trusty one! no tricksters any more!"
How could they other? He was in his place.

What followed? Just what he foresaw, what proved
The soundness of both judgments, — his, o' the knaves
And fools, each trickster with his dupe, — and theirs,
The people's, in what head and arm could help.
There was uprising, masks dropped, flags unfurled,
Weapons outflourished in the wind, my faith!
Heavily did he let his fist fall plumb
On each perturber of the public peace,
No matter whose the wagging head it broke —
From bald-pate craft and greed and impudence
Of night-hawk at first chance to prowl and prey
For glory and a little gain beside,
Passing for eagle in the dusk of the age, —
To florid head-top, foamy patriotism
And tribunitial daring, breast laid bare
Thro' confidence in rectitude, with hand
On private pistol in the pocket: these
And all the dupes of these, who lent themselves
As dust and feather do, to help offence

O' the wind that whirls them at you, then subsides
In safety somewhere, leaving filth afloat,
Annoyance you may brush from eyes and beard, —
These he stopped: bade the wind's spite howl or whine
Its worst outside the building, wind conceives
Meant to be pulled together and become
Its natural playground so. What foolishness
Of dust or feather proved importunate
And fell 'twixt thumb and finger, found them gripe
To detriment of bulk and buoyancy.
Then followed silence and submission. Next,
The inevitable comment came on work
And work's cost: he was censured as profuse
Of human life and liberty: too swift
And thorough his procedure, who had lagged
At the outset, lost the opportunity
Through timid scruples as to right and wrong.
"There 's no such certain mark of a small mind"
(So did Sagacity explain the fault)
"As when it needs must square away and sink
To its own small dimensions, private scale
Of right and wrong, — humanity i' the large,
The right and wrong of the universe, forsooth!
This man addressed himself to guard and guide
Hohenstiel-Schwangau. When the case demands
He frustrate villany in the egg, unhatched,
With easy stamp and minimum of pang
E'en to the punished reptile, 'There 's my oath
Restrains my foot,' objects our guide and guard,
'I must leave guardianship and guidance now:
Rather than stretch one handbreadth of the law,
I am bound to see it break from end to end.
First show me death i' the body politic:

Then prescribe pill and potion, what may please
Hohenstiel-Schwangau ! all is for her sake :
'T was she ordained my service should be so.
What if the event demonstrate her unwise,
If she unwill the thing she willed before ?
I hold to the letter and obey the bond
And leave her to perdition loyally.'
Whence followed thrice the expenditure we blame
O' human life and liberty : for want
O' the by-blow, came deliberate butcher's-work !"
"Elsewhere go carry your complaint!" bade he.
"Least, largest, there's one law for all the minds,
Here or above : be true at any price !
'T is just o' the great scale, that such happy stroke
Of falsehood would be found a failure. Truth
Still stands unshaken at her base by me,
Reigns paramount i' the world, for the large good
O' the long late generations, — I and you
Forgotten like this buried foolishness !
Not so the good I rooted in its grave."

This is why he refused to break his oath,
Rather appealed to the people, gained the power
To act as he thought best, then used it, once
For all, no matter what the consequence
To knaves and fools. As thus began his sway,
So, through its twenty years, one rule of right
Sufficed him : govern for the many first,
The poor mean multitude, all mouths and eyes :
Bid the few, better favored in the brain,
Be patient nor presume on privilege,
Help him or else be quiet, — never crave
That he help them, — increase, forsooth, the gulf
Yawning so terribly 'twixt mind and mind

I' the world here, which his purpose was to block
At bottom, were it by an inch, and bridge,
If by a filament, no more, at top.
Equalize things a little! And the way
He took to work that purpose out, was plain
Enough to intellect and honesty
And — superstition, style it if you please,
So long as you allow there was no lack
O' the quality imperative in man —
Reverence. You see deeper? thus saw he,
And by the light he saw, must walk: how else
Was he to do his part? a man's, with might
And main, and not a faintest touch of fear,
Sure he was in the hand of God who comes
Before and after, with a work to do
Which no man helps nor hinders. Thus the man, —
So timid when the business was to touch
The uncertain order of humanity,
Imperil, for a problematic cure
Of grievance on the surface, any good
I' the deep of things, dim yet discernible —
This same man, so irresolute before,
Show him a true excrescence to cut sheer,
A devil's-graft on God's foundation-stock,
Then — no complaint of indecision more!
He wrenched out the whole canker, root and branch,
Deaf to who cried that earth would tumble in
At its four corners if he touched a twig.
Witness that lie of lies, arch-infamy,
When the Republic, with her life involved
In just this law — "Each people rules itself
Its own way, not as any stranger please" —
Turned, and for first proof she was living, bade
Hohenstiel-Schwangau fasten on the throat

Of the first neighbor that claimed benefit
O' the law herself established: "Hohenstiel
For Hohenstielers! Rome, by parity
Of reasoning, for Romans? That 's a jest
Wants proper treatment, — lancet-puncture suits
The proud flesh: Rome ape Hohenstiel forsooth!"
And so the siege and slaughter and success
Whereof we nothing doubt that Hohenstiel
Will have to pay the price, in God's good time
Which does not always fall on Saturday
When the world looks for wages. Anyhow,
He found this infamy triumphant. Well:
Sagacity suggested, make this speech!
"The work was none of mine: suppose wrong wait,
Stand over for redressing? Mine for me,
My predecessors' work on their own head!
Meantime there 's plain advantage, should we leave
Things as we find them. Keep Rome manacled
Hand and foot: no fear of unruliness!
Her foes consent to even seem our friends
So long, no longer. Then, there 's glory got
By boldness and bravado to the world:
The disconcerted world must grin and bear
The old saucy writing, 'Grunt thereat who may,
So shall things be, for such my pleasure is —
Hohenstiel-Schwangau's.' How that reads in Rome
I' the Capitol where Brennus broke his pate,
And lends a flourish to our journalists!"
Only, it was nor read nor flourished of,
Since, not a moment did such glory stay
Excision of the canker! Out it came,
Root and branch, with much roaring, and some blood,
And plentiful abuse of him from friend

And foe. Who cared? Not Nature who assuaged
The pain and set the patient on his legs
Promptly: the better! had it been the worse,
'T is Nature you must try conclusions with,
Not he, since nursing canker kills the sick
For certain, while to cut may cure, at least.
"Ah," groaned a second time Sagacity,
"Again the little mind, precipitate,
Rash, rude, when even in the right, as here!
The great mind knows the power of gentleness,
Only tries force because persuasion fails.
Had this man, by prelusive trumpet-blast,
Signified 'Truth and Justice mean to come,
Nay, fast approach your threshold! Ere they knock,
See that the house be set in order, swept
And garnished, windows shut, and doors thrown wide!
The free State comes to visit the free Church:
Receive her! or . . . or . . . never mind what else!'
Thus moral suasion heralding brute force,
How had he seen the old abuses die,
And new life kindle here, there, everywhere,
Roused simply by that mild yet potent spell —
Beyond or beat of drum or stroke of sword —
Public opinion!"

"How, indeed?" he asked,
"When all to see, after some twenty years,
Were your own fool-face waiting for the sight,
Faced by as wide a grin from ear to ear
O' the knaves who, while the fools were waiting, worked —
Broke yet another generation's heart —
Twenty years' respite helping! Teach your nurse

'Compliance with, before you suck, the teat!'
Find what that means, and meanwhile hold your tongue!"

Whereof the war came which he knew must be.

Now, this had proved the dry-rot of the race
He ruled o'er, that, i' the old day, when was need
They fought for their own liberty and life,
Well did they fight, none better: whence, such love
Of fighting somehow still for fighting's sake
Against no matter whose the liberty
And life, so long as self-conceit should crow
And clap the wing, while justice sheathed her claw, —
That what had been the glory of the world
When thereby came the world's good, grew its plague
Now that the champion-armor, donned to dare
The dragon once, was clattered up and down
Highway and by-path of the world at peace,
Merely to mask marauding, or for sake
O' the shine and rattle that apprised the fields
Hohenstiel-Schwangau was a fighter yet,
And would be, till the weary world suppressed
Her peccant humors out of fashion now.
Accordingly the world spoke plain at last,
Promised to punish who next played with fire.

So, at his advent, such discomfiture
Taking its true shape of beneficence,
Hohenstiel-Schwangau, half-sad and part-wise,
Sat: if with wistful eye reverting oft
To each pet weapon, rusty on its peg,
Yet, with a sigh of satisfaction too
That, peacefulness become the law, herself

Got the due share of godsends in its train,
Cried shame and took advantage quietly.
Still, so the dry-rot had been nursed into
Blood, bones and marrow, that, from worst to best,
All, — clearest brains and soundest hearts save here, —
All had this lie acceptable for law
Plain as the sun at noonday — "War is best,
Peace is worst; peace we only tolerate
As needful preparation for new war:
War may be for whatever end we will —
Peace only as the proper help thereto.
Such is the law of right and wrong for us
Hohenstiel-Schwangau: for the other world,
As naturally, quite another law.
Are we content? The world is satisfied.
Discontent? Then the world must give us leave
To strike right, left, and exercise our arm
Torpid of late through overmuch repose,
And show its strength is still superlative
At somebody's expense in life or limb:
Which done, — let peace succeed and last a year!"
Such devil's-doctrine so was judged God's law,
We say, when this man stepped upon the stage,
That it had seemed a venial fault at most
Had he once more obeyed Sagacity.
"You come i' the happy interval of peace,
The favorable weariness from war:
Prolong it! artfully, as if intent
On ending peace as soon as possible.
Quietly so increase the sweets of ease
And safety, so employ the multitude,
Put hod and trowel so in idle hands,
So stuff and stop up wagging jaws with bread,
That selfishness shall surreptitiously

Do wisdom's office, whisper in the ear
Of Hohenstiel-Schwangau, there 's a pleasant feel
In being gently forced down, pinioned fast
To the easy arm-chair by the pleading arms
O' the world beseeching her to there abide
Content with all the harm done hitherto,
And let herself be petted in return,
Free to re-wage, in speech and prose and verse,
The old unjust wars, nay — in verse and prose
And speech, — to vaunt new victories shall prove
A plague o' the future, — so that words suffice
For present comfort, and no deeds denote
That — tired of illimitable line on line
Of boulevard-building, tired o' the theatre
With the tuneful thousand in their thrones above,
For glory of the male intelligence,
And Nakedness in her due niche below,
For illustration of the female use —
That she, 'twixt yawn and sigh, prepares to slip
Out of the arm-chair, wants fresh blood again
From over the boundary, to color-up
The sheeny sameness, keep the world aware
Hohenstiel-Schwangau's arm needs exercise
Despite the petting of the universe!
Come, you 're a city-builder: what 's the way
Wisdom takes when time needs that she entice
Some fierce tribe, castled on the mountain-peak,
Into the quiet and amenity
O' the meadow-land below? By crying 'Done
With fight now, down with fortress?' Rather —
'Dare
On, dare ever, not a stone displace!'
Cries Wisdom: 'Cradle of our ancestors,
Be bulwark, give our children safety still!

Who of our children please may stoop and taste
O' the valley-fatness, unafraid, — for why?
At first alarm they have thy mother-ribs
To run upon for refuge: foes forget
Scarcely that Terror on her vantage-coign,
Couchant supreme among the powers of air,
Watches — prepared to pounce — the country wide!
Meanwhile the encouraged valley holds its own,
From the first hut's adventure in descent,
Half home, half hiding place, — to dome and spire
Befitting the assured metropolis:
Nor means offence to the fort which caps the crag,
All undismantled of a turret-stone,
And bears the banner-pole that creaks at times
Embarrassed by the old emblazonment,
When festal days are to commemorate:
Otherwise left untenanted, no doubt,
Since, never fear, our myriads from below
Would rush, if needs were, man the walls again,
Renew the exploits of the earlier time
At moment's notice! But till notice sound,
Inhabit we in ease and opulence!'
And so, till one day thus a notice sounds,
Not trumpeted, but in a whisper-gust
Fitfully playing through mute city streets
At midnight weary of day's feast and game —
'Friends, your famed fort's a ruin past repair!
Its use is — to proclaim it had a use
Obsolete long since. Climb and study there
How to paint barbican and battlement
I' the scenes of our new theatre! We fight
Now — by forbidding neighbors to sell steel
Or buy wine, not by blowing out their brains!
Moreover, while we let time sap the strength

O' the walls omnipotent in menace once,
Neighbors would seem to have prepared surprise —
Run up defences in a mushroom-growth,
For all the world like what we boasted: brief—
Hohenstiel-Schwangau's policy is peace!' ''

Ay, so Sagacity advised him filch
Folly from fools: handsomely substitute
The dagger o' lath, while gay they sang and danced,
For that long dangerous sword they liked to feel,
Even at feast-time, clink and make friends start.
No! he said, "Hear the truth, and bear the truth,
And bring the truth to bear on all you are
And do, assured that only good comes thence
Whate'er the shape good take! While I have rule,
Understand! — war for war's sake, war for sake
O' the good war gets you as war's sole excuse,
Is damnable and damned shall be. You want
Glory? Why so do I, and so does God.
Where is it found, — in this paraded shame, —
One particle of glory? Once you warred
For liberty against the world, and won:
There was the glory. Now, you fain would war
Because the neighbor prospers overmuch, —
Because there has been silence half-an-hour,
Like Heaven on earth, without a cannon-shot
Announcing Hohenstielers-Schwangauese
Are minded to disturb the jubilee, —
Because the loud tradition echoes faint,
And who knows but posterity may doubt
If the great deeds were ever done at all,
Much less believe, were such to do again,
So the event would follow: therefore, prove
The old power, at the expense of somebody!

Oh Glory, — gilded bubble, bard and sage
So nickname rightly, — would thy dance endure
One moment, would thy vaunting make believe
Only one eye thy ball was solid gold,
Hadst thou less breath to buoy thy vacancy
Than a whole multitude expends in praise,
Less range for roaming than from head to head
Of a whole people? Flit, fall, fly again,
Only, fix never where the resolute hand
May prick thee, prove the glassy lie thou art!
Give me real intellect to reason with,
No multitude, no entity that apes
One wise man, being but a million fools!
How and whence wishest glory, thou wise one?
Wouldst get it, — didst thyself guide Providence, —
By stinting of his due each neighbor round
In strength and knowledge and dexterity
So as to have thy littleness grow large
By all those somethings once, turned nothings now,
As children make a molehill mountainous
By scooping out a trench around their pile,
And saving so the mudwork from approach?
Quite otherwise the cheery game of life,
True yet mimetic warfare, whereby man
Does his best with his utmost, and so ends
A victor most of all in fair defeat.
Who thinks, — would he have no one think beside?
Who knows, who does, — save his must learning die
And action cease? Why, so our giant proves
No better than a dwarf, once rivalry
Prostrate around him. Let the whole race stand
For him to try conclusions fairly with!
Show me the great man would engage his peer
Rather by grinning 'Cheat, thy gold is brass!'

Than granting 'Perfect piece of purest ore!
Still, is it less good mintage, this of mine?'
Well, and these right and sound results of soul
I' the strong and healthy one wise man, — shall such
Be vainly sought for, scornfully renounced
I' the multitude that make the entity —
The people? — to what purpose, if no less,
In power and purity of soul, below
The reach of the unit than, by multiplied
Might of the body, vulgarized the more,
Above, in thick and threefold brutishness?
See! you accept such one wise man, myself:
Wiser or less wise, still I operate
From my own stock of wisdom, nor exact
Of other sort of natures you admire,
That whoso rhymes a sonnet pays a tax,
Who paints a landscape dips brush at his cost,
Who scores a septett true for strings and wind
Mulcted must be — else how should I impose
Properly, attitudinize aright,
Did such conflicting claims as these divert
Hohenstiel-Schwangau from observing me?
Therefore, what I find facile, you be sure,
With effort or without it, you shall dare —
You, I aspire to make my better self
And truly the Great Nation. No more war
For war's sake, then! and, — seeing, wickedness
Springs out of folly, — no more foolish dread
O' the neighbor waxing too inordinate
A rival, through his gain of wealth and ease!
What? — keep me patient, Powers! — the people here,
Earth presses to her heart, nor owns a pride
Above her pride i' the race all flame and air
And aspiration to the boundless Great,

The incommensurably Beautiful —
Whose very falterings groundward come of flight
Urged by a pinion all too passionate
For heaven and what it holds of gloom and glow:
Bravest of thinkers, bravest of the brave
Doers, exalt in Science, rapturous
In Art, the — more than all — magnetic race
To fascinate their fellows, mould mankind
Hohenstiel-Schwangau-fashion, — these, what? — these
Will have to abdicate their primacy
Should such a nation sell them steel untaxed,
And such another take itself, on hire
For the natural sen'night, somebody for lord
Unpatronized by me whose back was turned?
Or such another yet would fain build bridge,
Lay rail, drive tunnel, busy its poor self
With its appropriate fancy: so there's — flash —
Hohenstiel-Schwangau up in arms at once!
Genius has somewhat of the infantine:
But of the childish, not a touch nor taint
Except through self-will, which, being foolishness,
Is certain, soon or late, of punishment
Which Providence avert! — and that it may
Avert what both of us would so deserve,
No foolish dread o' the neighbor, I enjoin!
By consequence, no wicked war with him,
While I rule!

"Does that mean — no war at all
When just the wickedness I here proscribe
Comes, haply, from the neighbor? Does my speech
Precede the praying that you beat the sword
To ploughshare, and the spear to pruning-hook,

And sit down henceforth under your own vine
And fig-tree through the sleepy summer month,
Letting what hurly-burly please explode
On the other side the mountain-frontier? No,
Beloved! I foresee and I announce
Necessity of warfare in one case,
For one cause: one way, I bid broach the blood
O' the world. For truth and right, and only right
And truth, — right, truth, on the absolute scale of God,
No pettiness of man's admeasurement, —
In such case only, and for such one cause,
Fight your hearts out, whatever fate betide
Hands energetic to the uttermost!
Lie not! Endure no lie which needs your heart
And hand to push it out of mankind's path —
No lie that lets the natural forces work
Too long ere lay it plain and pulverized —
Seeing man's life lasts only twenty years!
And such a lie, before both man and God,
Proving, at this time present, Austria's rule
O'er Italy, — for Austria's sake the first,
Italy's next, and our sake last of all,
Come with me and deliver Italy!
Smite hip and thigh until the oppressor leave
Free from the Adriatic to the Alps
The oppressed one! We were they who laid her low
In the old bad day when Villany braved Truth
And Right, and laughed 'Henceforward, God deposed,
Satan we set to rule for evermore
I' the world!' — whereof to stop the consequence,
And for atonement of false glory there
Gaped at and gabbled over by the world,

I purpose to get God enthroned again
For what the world will gird at as sheer shame
I' the cost of blood and treasure. 'All for naught —
Not even, say, some patch of province, splice
O' the frontier? — some snug honorarium-fee
Shut into glove and pocketed apace?'
(Questions Sagacity) 'in deference
To the natural susceptibility
Of folks at home, unwitting of that pitch
You soar to, and misdoubting if Truth, Right
And the other such augustnesses repay
Expenditure in coin o' the realm, — but prompt
To recognize the cession of Savoy
And Nice as marketable value!' No,
Sagacity, go preach to Metternich,
And, sermon ended, stay where he resides!
Hohenstiel-Schwangau, you and I must march
The other road! war for the hate of war,
Not love, this once!'' So Italy was free.

What else noteworthy and commendable
I' the man's career? — that he was resolute
No trepidation, much less treachery
On his part, should imperil from its poise
The ball o' the world, heaved up at such expense
Of pains so far, and ready to rebound,
Let but a finger maladroitly fall,
Under pretence of making fast and sure
The inch gained by late volubility,
And run itself back to the ancient rest
At foot o' the mountain. Thus he ruled, gave proof
The world had gained a point, progressive so,
By choice, this time, as will and power concurred,
O' the fittest man to rule; not chance of birth,

Or such-like dice-throw. Oft Sagacity
Was at his ear: "Confirm this clear advance,
Support this wise procedure! You, elect
O' the people, mean to justify their choice
And out-king all the kingly imbeciles;
But that 's just half the enterprise: remains
You find them a successor like yourself,
In head and heart and eye and hand and aim,
Or all done 's undone; and whom hope to mould
So like you as the pupil Nature sends,
The son and heir's completeness which you lack?
Lack it no longer! Wed the pick o' the world,
Where'er you think you find it. Should she be
A queen, — tell Hohenstielers-Schwangauese
'So do the old enthroned decrepitudes
Acknowledge, in the rotten hearts of them,
Their knell is knolled, they hasten to make peace
With the new order, recognize in me
Your right to constitute what king you will,
Cringe therefore crown in hand and bride on arm,
To both of us: we triumph, I suppose!'
Is it the other sort of rank? — bright eye,
Soft smile, and so forth, all her queenly boast?
Undaunted the exordium — 'I, the man
O' the people, with the people mate myself:
So stand, so fall. Kings, keep your crowns and brides!
Our progeny (if Providence agree)
Shall live to tread the baubles underfoot
And bid the scarecrows consort with their kin.
For son, as for his sire, be the free wife
In the free state!'"

That is, Sagacity
Would prop up one more lie, the most of all

Pernicious fancy that the son and heir
Receives the genius from the sire, himself
Transmits as surely, — ask experience else !
Which answers, — never was so plain a truth
As that God drops his seed of heavenly flame
Just where He wills on earth : sometimes where man
Seems to tempt — such the accumulated store
Of faculties — one spark to fire the heap ;
Sometimes where, fire-ball-like, it falls upon
The naked unpreparedness of rock,
Burns, beaconing the nations through their night.
Faculties, fuel for the flame ? All helps
Come, ought to come, or come not, crossed by chance,
From culture and transmission. What's your want
I' the son and heir ? Sympathy, aptitude,
Teachableness, the fuel for the flame ?
You 'll have them for your pains : but the flame's self,
The novel thought of God shall light the world ?
No, poet, though your offspring rhyme and chime
I' the cradle, — painter, no, for all your pet
Draws his first eye, beats Salvatore's boy, —
And thrice no, statesman, should your progeny
Tie bib and tucker with no tape but red,
And make a foolscap kite of protocols !
Critic and copyist and bureaucrat
To heart's content ! The seed o' the apple-tree
Brings forth another tree which bears a crab :
'T is the great gardener grafts the excellence
On wildings where he will.

" How plain I view,
Across those misty years 'twixt me and Rome "—
(Such the man's answer to Sagacity)
" The little wayside temple, half-way down

To a mild river that makes oxen white
Miraculously, un-mouse-colors skin,
Or so the Roman country people dream!
I view that sweet small shrub-embedded shrine
On the declivity, was sacred once
To a transmuting Genius of the land,
Could touch and turn its dunnest natures bright,
— Since Italy means the Land of the Ox, we know.
Well, how was it the due succession fell
From priest to priest who ministered i' the cool
Calm fane o' the Clitumnian god? The sire
Brought forth a son and sacerdotal sprout,
Endowed instinctively with good and grace
To suit the gliding gentleness below —
Did he? Tradition tells another tale.
Each priest obtained his predecessor's staff,
Robe, fillet and insignia, blamelessly,
By springing out of ambush, soon or late,
And slaying him: the initiative rite
Simply was murder, save that murder took,
I' the case, another and religious name.
So it was once, is now, shall ever be
With genius and its priesthood in this world:
The new power slays the old — but handsomely.
There he lies, not diminished by an inch
Of stature that he graced the altar with,
Though somebody of other bulk and build
Cries 'What a goodly personage lies here
Reddening the water where the bulrush roots!
May I conduct the service in his place,
Decently and in order, as did he,
And, as he did not, keep a wary watch
When meditating 'neath yon willow shade!'
Find out your best man, sure the son of him

Will prove best man again, and, better still
Somehow than best, the grandson-prodigy !
You think the world would last another day
Did we so make us masters of the trick
Whereby the works go, we could pre-arrange
Their play and reach perfection when we please ?
Depend on it, the change and the surprise
Are part o' the plan : 't is we wish steadiness ;
Nature prefers a motion by unrest,
Advancement through this force which jostles that.
And so, since much remains i' the world to see,
Here 's the world still, affording God the sight."
Thus did the man refute Sagacity
Ever at this old whisper in his ear :
" Here are you picked out, by a miracle,
And placed conspicuously enough, folks say
And you believe, by Providence outright
Taking a new way — nor without success —
To put the world upon its mettle : good !
But Fortune alternates with Providence ;
Resource is soon exhausted. Never count
On such a happy hit occurring twice !
Try the old method next time ! "

" Old enough,"
(At whisper in his ear, the laugh outbroke)
" And mode the most discredited of all,
By just the men and women who make boast
They are kings and queens thereby ! Mere self-defence
Should teach them, on one chapter of the law
Must be no sort of trifling — chastity :
They stand or fall, as their progenitors
Were chaste or unchaste. Now, run eye around
My crowned acquaintance, give each life its look

And pride of life, — and, consequent on these,
The worship of that prince o' the power o' the air
Who paints the cloud and fills the emptiness
And bids his votaries, famishing for truth,
Feed on a lie.

Alack, one lies oneself
Even in the stating that one's end was truth,
Truth only, if one states as much in words!
Give me the inner chamber of the soul
For obvious easy argument! 't is there
One pits the silent truth against a lie —
Truth which breaks shell a careless simple bird,
Nor wants a gorget nor a beak filed fine,
Steel spurs, and the whole armory o' the tongue,
To equalize the odds. But, do your best,
Words have to come: and somehow words deflect
As the best cannon ever rifled will.

"Deflect" indeed! nor merely words from thoughts
But names from facts: "Clitumnus" did I say?
As if it had been his ox-whitening wave
Whereby folk practised that grim cult of old —
The murder of their temple's priest by who
Would qualify for his succession. Sure —
Nemi was the true lake's style. Dream had need
Of the ox-whitening piece of prettiness
And so confused names, well known once awake.

So, i' the Residenz yet, not Leicester-square,
Alone, — no such congenial intercourse! —
My reverie concludes, as dreaming should,
With daybreak: nothing done and over yet,
Except cigars! The adventure thus may be,
Or never needs to be at all: who knows?

My Cousin-Duke, perhaps, at whose hard head
— Is it, now — is this letter to be launched,
The sight of whose gray oblong, whose grim seal,
Set all these fancies floating for an hour?

Twenty years are good gain, come what come will!
Double or quits! The letter goes! Or stays?

FIFINE AT THE FAIR.

1872.

DONE ELVIRE.

Vous plait-il, don Juan, nous éclaircir ces beaux mystères ?

DON JUAN.

Madame, à vous dire la vérité . . .

DONE ELVIRE.

Ah ! que vous savez mal vous défendre pour un homme de cour, et qui doit être accoutumé à ces sortes de choses ! J'ai pitié de vous voir la confusion que vous avez. Que ne vous armez-vous le front d'une noble effronterie ? Que ne me jurez-vous que vous êtes toujours dans les mêmes sentimens pour moi, que vous m'aimez toujours avec une ardeur sans égale, et que rien n'est capable de vous détacher de moi que la mort ? — MOLIÈRE, *Don Juan*, acte i. sc. 3.

DONNA ELVIRA.

Don Juan, might you please to help one give a guess,
Hold up a candle, clear this fine mysteriousness ?

DON JUAN.

Madam, if needs I must declare the truth, — in short . . .

DONNA ELVIRA.

Fie, for a man of mode, accustomed at the court
To such a style of thing, how awkwardly my lord
Attempts defence ! You move compassion, that 's the word —
Dumb-foundered and chap-fallen ! Why don't you arm your brow

With noble impudence? Why don't you swear and vow
No sort of change is come to any sentiment
You ever had for me? Affection holds the bent,
You love me now as erst, with passion that makes pale
All ardor else: nor aught in nature can avail
To separate us two, save what, in stopping breath,
May peradventure stop devotion likewise — death!

PROLOGUE.

AMPHIBIAN.

I.

THE fancy I had to-day,
Fancy which turned a fear!
I swam far out in the bay,
Since waves laughed warm and clear.

II.

I lay and looked at the sun,
The noon-sun looked at me:
Between us two, no one
Live creature, that I could see.

III.

Yes! There came floating by
Me, who lay floating too.
Such a strange butterfly!
Creature as dear as new:

IV.

Because the membraned wings
So wonderful, so wide,
So sun-suffused, were things
Like soul and naught beside.

v.

A handbreadth over head!
All of the sea my own,
It owned the sky instead;
Both of us were alone.

VI.

I never shall join its flight,
For, naught buoys flesh in air.
If it touch the sea — good night!
Death sure and swift waits there.

VII.

Can the insect feel the better
For watching the uncouth play
Of limbs that slip the fetter,
Pretend as they were not clay?

VIII.

Undoubtedly I rejoice
That the air comports so well
With a creature which had the choice
Of the land once. Who can tell?

IX.

What if a certain soul
Which early slipped its sheath,
And has for its home the whole
Of heaven, thus look beneath,

X.

Thus watch one who, in the world,
Both lives and likes life's way,
Nor wishes the wings unfurled
That sleep in the worm, they say?

XI.

But sometimes when the weather
Is blue, and warm waves tempt
To free oneself of tether,
And try a life exempt

XII.

From worldly noise and dust,
In the sphere which overbrims
With passion and thought, — why, just
Unable to fly, one swims!

XIII.

By passion and thought upborne,
One smiles to oneself — "They fare
Scarce better, they need not scorn
Our sea, who live in the air!"

XIV.

Emancipate through passion
And thought, with sea for sky,
We substitute, in a fashion,
For heaven — poetry:

XV.

Which sea, to all intent,
Gives flesh such noon-disport
As a finer element
Affords the spirit-sort.

XVI.

Whatever they are, we seem:
Imagine the thing they know;
All deeds they do, we dream;
Can heaven be else but so?

XVII.

And meantime, yonder streak
Meets the horizon's verge;
That is the land, to seek
If we tire or dread the surge:

XVIII.

Land the solid and safe —
To welcome again (confess!)
When, high and dry, we chafe
The body, and don the dress.

XIX.

Does she look, pity, wonder
At one who mimics flight,
Swims — heaven above, sea under,
Yet always earth in sight?

FIFINE AT THE FAIR.

I.

O TRIP and skip, Elvire! Link arm in arm with me!
Like husband and like wife, together let us see
The tumbling-troop arrayed, the strollers on their stage,
Drawn up and under arms, and ready to engage.

II.

Now, who supposed the night would play us such a prank?
— That what was raw and brown, rough pole and shaven plank?
Mere bit of hoarding, half by trestle propped, half tub,
Would flaunt it forth as brisk as butterfly from grub?

This comes of sun and air, of Autumn afternoon,
And Pornic and Saint Gille, whose feast affords the boon —
This scaffold turned parterre, this flower-bed in full blow,
Bateleurs, baladines! We shall not miss the show!
They pace and promenade; they presently will dance:
What good were else i' the drum and fife? O pleasant land of France!

III.

Who saw them make their entry? At wink of eve, be sure!
They love to steal a march, nor lightly risk the lure.
They keep their treasure hid, nor stale (improvident)
Before the time is ripe, each wonder of their tent –
Yon six-legged sheep, to wit, and he who beats a gong,
Lifts cap and waves salute, exhilarates the throng —
Their ape of many years and much adventure, grim
And gray with pitying fools who find a joke in him.
Or, best, the human beauty, Mimi, Toinette, Fifine,
Tricot fines down if fat, padding plumps up if lean,
Ere, shedding petticoat, modesty, and such toys,
They bounce forth, squalid girls transformed to gamesome boys.

IV.

No, no, thrice, Pornic, no! Perpend the authentic tale!
'T was not for every Gawain to gaze upon the Grail!
But whoso went his rounds, when flew bat, flitted midge,
Might hear across the dusk, — where both roads join the bridge,

Hard by the little port, — creak a slow caravan,
A chimneyed house on wheels ; so shyly-sheathed, began
To broaden out the bud which, bursting unaware,
Now takes away our breath, queen-tulip of the Fair !

v.

Yet morning promised much : for, pitched and slung and reared
On terrace 'neath the tower, 'twixt tree and tree appeared
An airy structure ; how the pennon from its dome,
Frenetic to be free, makes one red stretch for home !
The home far and away, the distance where lives joy,
The cure, at once and ever, of world and world's annoy ;
Since, what lolls full in front, a furlong from the booth,
But ocean-idleness, sky-blue and millpond-smooth ?

VI.

Frenetic to be free ! And, do you know, there beats
Something within my breast, as sensitive ? — repeats
The fever of the flag ? My heart makes just the same
Passionate stretch, fires up for lawlessness, lays claim
To share the life they lead : losels, who have and use
The hour what way they will, — applaud them or abuse
Society, whereof myself am at the beck,
Whose call obey, and stoop to burden stiffest neck !

VII.

Why is it that whene'er a faithful few combine
To cast allegiance off, play truant, nor repine,
Agree to bear the worst, forego the best in store

For us who, left behind, do duty as of yore, —
Why is it that, disgraced, they seem to relish life the more ?
— Seem as they said " We know a secret passing praise
Or blame of such as you ! Remain ! we go our ways
With something you o'erlooked, forgot or chose to sweep
Clean out of door : our pearl picked from your rubbish-heap.
You care not for your loss, we calculate our gain.
All 's right. Are you content ? Why, so let things remain !
To the wood then, to the wild : free life, full liberty ! "
And when they rendezvous beneath the inclement sky,
House by the hedge, reduced to brute-companionship,
— Misguided ones who gave society the slip,
And find too late how boon a parent they despised,
What ministration spurned, how sweet and civilized —
Then, left alone at last with self-sought wretchedness,
No interloper else ! — why is it, can we guess ? —
At somebody's expense, goes up so frank a laugh ?
As though they held the corn, and left us only chaff
From garners crammed and closed. And we indeed are clever
If we get grain as good, by thrashing straw forever !

VIII.

Still, truants as they are and purpose yet to be,
That nowise needs forbid they venture — as you see —
To cross confine, approach the once familiar roof
O' the kindly race their flight estranged : stand half aloof,
Sidle half up, press near, and proffer wares for sale
— In their phrase — make, in ours, white levy of black mail.

They, of the wild, require some touch of us the tame,
Since clothing, meat and drink, mean money all the same.

IX.

If hunger, proverbs say, allures the wolf from wood,
Much more the bird must dare a dash at something good:
Must snatch up, bear away in beak, the trifle-treasure
To wood and wild, and then — O how enjoy at leisure!
Was never tree-built nest, you climbed and took, of bird
(Rare city-visitant, talked of, scarce seen or heard),
But, when you would dissect the structure, piece by piece,
You found, enwreathed amid the country-product — fleece
And feather, thistle-fluffs and bearded windle-straws —
Some shred of foreign silk, unravelling of gauze,
Bit, may be, of brocade, mid fur and blow-bell-down:
Filched plainly from mankind, dear tribute paid by town,
Which proved how oft the bird had plucked up heart of grace,
Swooped down at waif and stray, made furtively our place
Pay tax and toll, then borne the booty to enrich
Her paradise i' the waste; the how and why of which,
That is the secret, there the mystery that stings!

X.

For, what they traffic in, consists of just the things
We, — proud ones who so scorn dwellers without the pale,
Bateleurs, baladines, white leviers of black mail, —

I say, they sell what we most pique us that we keep !
How comes it, all we hold so dear they count so cheap ?

XI.

What price should you impose, for instance, on repute,
Good fame, your own good fame and family's to boot?
Stay start of quick moustache, arrest the angry rise
Of eyebrow ! All I asked is answered by surprise.
Now tell me : are you worth the cost of a cigar?
Go boldly, enter booth, disburse the coin at bar
Of doorway where presides the master of the troop,
And forthwith you survey his Graces in a group,
Live Picture, picturesque no doubt and close to life :
His sisters, right and left ; the Grace in front, his wife.
Next, who is this performs the feat of the Trapeze ?
Lo, she is launched, look — fie, the fairy ! — how she flees
O'er all those heads thrust back, — mouths, eyes, one gape and stare, —
No scrap of skirt impedes free passage through the air,
Till, plumb on the other side, she lights and laughs again,
That fairy-form, whereof each muscle, nay, each vein
The curious may inspect, — his daughter that he sells
Each rustic for five sous. Desiderate aught else
O' the vendor ? As you leave his show, why, joke the man !
" You cheat : your six-legged sheep, I recollect, began
Both life and trade, last year, trimmed properly and clipt,
As the Twin-headed Babe, and Human Nondescript! "
What does he care ? You paid his price, may pass your jest.
So values he repute, good fame, and all the rest !

XII.

But try another tack ; say : "I indulge caprice,
Who am Don and Duke, and Knight, beside, o' the Golden Fleece,
And, never mind how rich. Abandon this career !
Have hearth and home, nor let your womankind appear
Without as multiplied a coating as protects
An onion from the eye ! Become, in all respects,
God-fearing householder, subsistent by brain-skill,
Hand-labor ; win your bread whatever way you will,
So it be honestly, — and, while I have a purse,
Means shall not lack !" — His thanks will be the roundest curse
That ever rolled from lip.

XIII.

Now, what is it ? — returns
The question — heartens so this losel that he spurns
All we so prize ? I want, put down in black and white,
What compensating joy, unknown and infinite,
Turns lawlessness to law, makes destitution — wealth,
Vice — virtue, and disease of soul and body — health ?

XIV.

Ah, the slow shake of head, the melancholy smile,
The sigh almost a sob ! What 's wrong, was right erewhile ?
Why are we two at once such ocean-width apart ?
Pale fingers press my arm, and sad eyes probe my heart.
Why is the wife in trouble ?

XV.

This way, this way, Fifine !
Here 's she, shall make my thoughts be surer what they mean !

First let me read the signs, portray you past mistake
The gipsy's foreign self, no swarth our sun could bake.
Yet where 's a woolly trace degrades the wiry hair?
And note the Greek-nymph nose, and — oh, my Hebrew pair
Of eye and eye — o'erarched by velvet of the mole —
That swim as in a sea, that dip and rise and roll,
Spilling the light around! While either ear is cut
Thin as a dusk-leaved rose carved from a cocoa-nut.
And then, her neck! now, grant you had the power to deck,
Just as your fancy pleased, the bistre-length of neck,
Could lay, to shine against its shade, a moonlike row
Of pearls, each round and white as bubble Cupids blow
Big out of mother's milk, — what pearl-moon would surpass
That string of mock-turquoise, those almandines of glass,
Where girlhood terminates? for with breasts'-birth commence
The boy, and page-costume, till pink and impudence
End admirably all: complete the creature trips
Our way now, brings sunshine upon her spangled hips,
As here she fronts us full, with pose half-frank, half-fierce!

XVI.

Words urged in vain, Elvire! You waste your quarte and tierce,
Lunge at a phantom here, try fence in fairyland.
For me, I own defeat, ask but to understand
The acknowledged victory of whom I call my queen,
Sexless and bloodless sprite: though mischievous and mean,

Yet free and flower-like too, with loveliness for law,
And self-sustainment made morality.

XVII.

A flaw
Do you account i' the lily, of lands which traveller know,
That, just as golden gloom supersedes Northern snow
I' the chalice, so, about each pistil, spice is packed, —
Deliriously-drugged scent, in lieu of odor lacked,
With us, by bee and moth, their banquet to enhance
At morn and eve, when dew, the chilly sustenance,
Needs mixture of some chaste and temperate perfume?
I ask, is she in fault who guards such golden gloom,
Such dear and damning scent, by who cares what devices,
And takes the idle life of insects she entices
When, drowned to heart's desire, they satiate the inside
O' the lily, mark her wealth and manifest her pride?

XVIII.

But, wiser, we keep off, nor tempt the acrid juice;
Discreet we peer and praise, put rich things to right use.
No flavorous venomed bell, — the rose it is, I wot,
Only the rose, we pluck and place, unwronged a jot,
No worse for homage done by every devotee,
I' the proper loyal throne, on breast where rose should be.
Or if the simpler sweets we have to choose among,
Would taste between our teeth, and give its toy the tongue, —
O gorgeous poison-plague, on thee no hearts are set!
We gather daisy meek, or maiden violet:
I think it is Elvire we love, and not Fifine.

XIX.

"How does she make my thoughts be sure of what they mean?"
Judge and be just! Suppose, an age and time long past
Renew for our behoof one pageant more, the last
O' the kind, sick Louis liked to see defile between
Him and the yawning grave, its passage served to screen.
With eye as gray as lead, with cheek as brown as bronze,
Here where we stand, shall sit and suffer Louis Onze:
The while from yonder tent parade forth, not — oh, no —
Bateleurs, baladines! but range themselves a-row
Those well-sung women-worthies whereof loud fame still finds
Some echo linger faint, less in our hearts than minds.

XX.

See, Helen! pushed in front o' the world's worst night and storm,
By Lady Venus' hand on shoulder: the sweet form
Shrinkingly prominent, though mighty, like a moon
Outbreaking from a cloud, to put harsh things in tune,
And magically bring mankind to acquiesce
In its own ravage, — call no curse upon, but bless
(Beldame, a moment since) the outbreaking beauty, now,
That casts o'er all the blood a candor from her brow.
See, Cleopatra! bared, the entire and sinuous wealth
O' the shining shape; each orb of indolent ripe health,
Captured, just where it finds a fellow-orb as fine
I' the body: traced about by jewels which outline,

Fire-frame, and keep distinct, perfections — lest they melt
To soft smooth unity ere half their hold be felt:
Yet, o'er that white and wonder, a soul's predominance
I' the head so high and haught — except one thievish glance,
From back of oblong eye, intent to count the slain.
Hush, — O I know, Elvire! Be patient, more remain!
What say you to Saint . . . Pish! Whatever Saint you please,
Cold-pinnacled aloft o' the spire, prays calm the seas
From Pornic Church, and oft at midnight (peasants say)
Goes walking out to save from shipwreck: well she may!
For think how many a year has she been conversant
With naught but winds and rains, sharp courtesy and scant
O' the wintry snow that coats the pent-house of her shrine,
Covers each knee, climbs near, but spares the smile benign
Which seems to say "I looked for scarce so much from earth!"
She follows, one long thin pure finger in the girth
O' the girdle — whence the folds of garment, eye and eye,
Besprent with fleurs-de-lys, flow down and multiply
Around her feet, — and one, pressed hushingly to lip:
As if, while thus we made her march, some foundering ship
Might miss her from her post, nearer to God half-way
In heaven, and she inquired "Who that treads earth can pray?

I doubt if even she, the unashamed ! though, sure,
She must have stripped herself only to clothe the poor."

XXI.

This time, enough 's a feast, not one more form, Elvire !
Provided you allow that, bringing up the rear
O' the bevy I am loth to — by one bird — curtail,
First note may lead to last, an octave crown the scale,
And this feminity be followed — do not flout !
By — who concludes the masque with curtsey, smile and pout,
Submissive-mutinous ? No other than Fifine
Points toe, imposes haunch, and pleads with tambourine !

XXII.

" Well, what 's the meaning here, what does the masque intend,
Which, unabridged, we saw file past us, with no end
Of fair ones, till Fifine came, closed the catalogue ? "

XXIII.

Task fancy yet again ! Suppose you cast this clog
Of flesh away (that weeps, upbraids, withstands my arm)
And pass to join your peers, paragon charm with charm,
As I shall show you may, — prove best of beauty there !
Yourself confront yourself ! This, help me to declare
That yonder-you, who stand beside these, braving each
And blinking none, beat her who lured to Troy-town beach

The purple prows of Greece, — nay, beat Fifine; whose face,
Mark how I will inflame, when seigneur-like I place
I' the tambourine, to spot the strained and piteous blank
Of pleading parchment, see, no less than a whole franc!

XXIV.

Ah, do you mark the brown o' the cloud, made bright with fire
Through and through? as, old wiles succeeding to desire,
Quality (you and I) once more compassionate
A hapless infant, doomed (fie on such partial fate!)
To sink the inborn shame, waive privilege of sex,
And posture as you see, support the nods and becks
Of clowns that have their stare, nor always pay its price;
An infant born perchance as sensitive and nice
As any soul of you, proud dames, whom destiny
Keeps uncontaminate from stigma of the sty
She wallows in! You draw back skirts from filth like her
Who, possibly, braves scorn, if, scorned, she minister
To age, want, and disease of parents one or both;
Nay, peradventure, stoops to degradation, loth
That some just-budding sister, the dew yet on the rose,
Should have to share in turn the ignoble trade, — who knows?

XXV.

Ay, who indeed! Myself know nothing, but dare guess
That off she trips in haste to hand the booty . . . yes,

'Twixt fold and fold of tent, there looms he, dim-discerned,
The ogre, lord of all those lavish limbs have earned!
— Brute-beast-face, — ravage, scar, scowl and malignancy, —
O' the Strong Man, whom (no doubt, her husband) by-and-by
You shall behold do feats: lift up nor quail beneath
A quintal in each hand, a cart-wheel 'twixt his teeth.
Oh she prefers sheer strength to ineffective grace,
Breeding and culture! seeks the essential in the case!
To him has flown my franc; and welcome, if that squint
O' the diabolic eye so soften through absinthe,
That, for once, tambourine, tunic and tricot 'scape
Their customary curse "Not half the gain o' the ape!"
Ay, they go in together!

XXVI.

Yet still her phantom stays
Opposite, where you stand: as steady 'neath our gaze —
The live Elvire's and mine — though fancy-stuff and mere
Illusion; to be judged, — dream-figures, — without fear
Or favor, those the false, by you and me the true.

XXVII.

"What puts it in my head to make yourself judge you?"
Well, it may be, the name of Helen brought to mind
A certain myth I mused in years long left behind:
How she that fled from Greece with Paris whom she loved,

And came to Troy, and there found shelter, and so proved
Such cause of the world's woe, — how she, old stories call
This creature, Helen's self, never saw Troy at all.
Jove had his fancy-fit, must needs take empty air,
Fashion her likeness forth, and set the phantom there
I' the midst for sport, to try conclusions with the blind
And blundering race, the game create for Gods, mankind:
Experiment on these, — establish who would yearn
To give up life for her, who, other-minded, spurn
The best her eyes could smile, — make half the world sublime,
And half absurd, for just a phantom all the time!
Meanwhile true Helen's self sat, safe and far away,
By a great river-side, beneath a purer day,
With solitude around, tranquillity within;
Was able to lean forth, look, listen, through the din
And stir; could estimate the worthlessness or worth
Of Helen who inspired such passion to the earth,
A phantom all the time! That put it in my head,
To make yourself judge you — the phantom-wife instead
O' the tearful true Elvire!

XXVIII.

I thank the smile at last
Which thins away the tear! Our sky was overcast,
And something fell; but day clears up: if there chanced rain,
The landscape glistens more. I have not vexed in vain
Elvire: because she knows, now she has stood the test,

How, this and this being good, herself may still be best
O' the beauty in review ; because the flesh that claimed
Unduly my regard, she thought, the taste, she blamed
In me, for things extern, was all mistake, she finds, —
Or will find, when I prove that bodies show me minds,
That, through the outward sign, the inward grace aliures,
And sparks from heaven transpierce earth's coarsest covertures, —
All by demonstrating the value of Fifine !

XXIX.

Partake my confidence ! No creature 's made so mean
But that, some way, it boasts, could we investigate,
Its supreme worth : fulfils, by ordinance of fate,
Its momentary task, gets glory all its own,
Tastes triumph in the world, pre-eminent, alone.
Where is the single grain of sand, mid millions heaped
Confusedly on the beach, but, did we know, has leaped
Or will leap, would we wait, i' the century, some once,
To the very throne of things ? — earth's brightest for the nonce,
When sunshine shall impinge on just that grain's facette
Which fronts him fullest, first, returns his ray with jet
Of promptest praise, thanks God best in creation's name !
As firm is my belief, quick sense perceives the same
Self-vindicating flash illustrate every man
And woman of our mass, and prove, throughout the plan,
No detail but, in place allotted it, was prime
And perfect.

XXX.

Witness her, kept waiting all this time !
What happy angle makes Fifine reverberate
Sunshine, least sand-grain, she, of shadiest social state

No adamantine shield, polished like Helen there,
Fit to absorb the sun, regorge him till the glare,
Dazing the universe, draw Troy-ward those blind beaks
Of equal-sided ships rowed by the well-greaved Greeks!
No Asian mirror, like yon Ptolemaic witch
Able to fix sun fast and tame sun down, enrich,
Not burn the world with beams thus flatteringly rolled
About her, head to foot, turned slavish snakes of gold:
And oh, no tinted pane of oriel sanctity,
Does our Fifine afford, such as permits supply
Of lustrous heaven, revealed, far more than mundane sight
Could master, to thy cell, pure Saint! where, else too bright,
So suits thy sense the orb, that, what outside was noon,
Pales, through thy lozenged blue, to meek benefic moon!
What then? does that prevent each dunghill, we may pass
Daily, from boasting too its bit of looking-glass,
Its sherd which, sun-smit, shines, shoots arrowy fire beyond
That satin-muffled mope, your sulky diamond?

XXXI.

And now, the mingled ray she shoots, I decompose
Her antecedents, take for execrable! Gloze
No whit on your premiss: let be, there was no worst
Of degradation spared Fifine: ordained from first
To last, in body and soul, for one life-long debauch,
The Pariah of the North, the European Nautch!
This, far from seek to hide, she puts in evidence
Calmly, displays the brand, bids pry without offence
Your finger on the place. You comment "Fancy us
So operated on, maltreated, mangled thus!

Such torture in our case, had we survived an hour ?
Some other sort of flesh and blood must be, with power
Appropriate to the vile, unsensitive, tough-thonged,
In lieu of our fine nerve ! Be sure, she was not wronged
Too much : you must not think she winced at prick
as we ! ”
Come, come, that 's what you say, or would, were
thoughts but free.

XXXII.

Well then, thus much confessed, what wonder if
there steal
Unchallenged to my heart the force of one appeal
She makes, and justice stamp the sole claim she asserts ?
So absolutely good is truth, truth never hurts
The teller, whose worst crime gets somehow grace,
avowed.
To me, that silent pose and prayer proclaimed aloud
“ Know all of me outside, the rest be emptiness
For such as you ! I call attention to my dress,
Coiffure, outlandish features, lithe memorable limbs,
Piquant entreaty, all that eye-glance over-skims.
Does this give pleasure ? Then, repay the pleasure, put
Its price i' the tambourine ! Do you seek further ? Tut !
I 'm just my instrument, — sound hollow : mere
smooth skin
Stretched o'er gilt framework, I : rub-dub, naught
else within —
Always, for such as you ! — if I have use elsewhere, —
If certain bells, now mute, can jingle, need you care ?
Be it enough, there 's truth i' the pleading, which
comports
With no word spoken out in cottages or courts,
Since all I plead is ‘ Pay for just the sight you see,

And give no credit to another charm in me!'
Do I say, like your Love? 'To praise my face is well,
But, who would know my worth, must search my heart to tell!'
Do I say, like your Wife? 'Had I passed in review
The produce of the globe, my man of men were — you!'
Do I say, like your Helen? 'Yield yourself up, obey
Implicitly, nor pause to question, to survey
Even the worshipful! prostrate you at my shrine!
Shall you dare controvert what the world counts divine?
Array your private taste, own liking of the sense,
Own longing of the soul, against the impudence
Of history, the blare and bullying of verse?
As if man ever yet saw reason to disburse
The amount of what sense liked, soul longed for,— given, devised
As love, forsooth, — until the price was recognized
As moderate enough by divers fellow-men!
Then, with his warrant safe that these would love too, then,
Sure that particular gain implies a public loss,
And that no smile he buys but proves a slash across
The face, a stab into the side of somebody —
Sure that, along with love's main-purchase, he will buy
Up the whole stock of earth's uncharitableness,
Envy and hatred, — then, decides he to profess
His estimate of one, by love discerned, though dim
To all the world beside: since what's the world to him?'
Do I say, like your Queen of Egypt? 'Who foregoes
My cup of witchcraft — fault be on the fool! He knows
Nothing of how I pack my wine-press, turn its winch

Three-times-three, all the time to song and dance, nor flinch
From charming on and on, till at the last I squeeze
Out the exhaustive drop that leaves behind mere lees
And dregs, vapidity, thought essence heretofore!
Sup of my sorcery, old pleasures please no more!
Be great, be good, love, learn, have potency of hand
Or heart or head, — what boots? You die, nor understand
What bliss might be in life: you ate the grapes, but knew
Never the taste of wine, such vintage as I brew!'
Do I say, like your Saint? 'An exquisitest touch
Bides in the birth of things: no after-time can much
Enhance that fine, that faint, fugitive first of all!
What color paints the cup o' the May-rose, like the small
Suspicion of a blush which doubtfully begins?
What sound outwarbles brook, while, at the source, it wins
That moss and stone dispart, allow its bubblings breathe?
What taste excels the fruit, just where sharp flavors sheathe
Their sting, and let encroach the honey that allays?
And so with soul and sense; when sanctity betrays
First fear lest earth below seem real as heaven above,
And holy worship, late, change soon to sinful love —
Where is the plenitude of passion which endures
Comparison with that, I ask of amateurs?'
Do I say, like Elvire" . . .

XXXIII.

(Your husband holds you fast,
Will have you listen, learn your character at last!)

"Do I say? — like her mixed unrest and discontent,
Reproachfulness and scorn, with that submission blent
So strangely, in the face, by sad smiles and gay tears, —
Quiescence which attacks, rebellion which endears, —
Say? 'As you loved me once, could you but love me now!
Years probably have graved their passage on my brow,
Lips turn more rarely red, eyes sparkle less than erst;
Such tribute body pays to time; but, unamerced, 471
The soul retains, nay, boasts old treasure multiplied.
Though dew-prime flee, — mature at noonday, love defied
Chance, the wind, change, the rain: love, strenuous all the more
For storm, struck deeper root and choicer fruitage bore,
Despite the rocking world; yet truth struck root in vain:
While tenderness bears fruit, you praise, not taste again.
Why? They are yours, which once were hardly yours, might go
To grace another's ground: and then — the hopes we know, 479
The fears we keep in mind! — when, ours to arbitrate,
Your part was to bow neck, bid fall decree of fate.
Then, O the knotty point — white-night's work to revolve —
What meant that smile, that sigh? Not Solon's self could solve!
Then, O the deep surmise what one word might express,
And if what seemed her "No" may not have meant her "Yes"!
Then, such annoy, for cause — calm welcome, such acquist

Of rapture if, refused her arm, hand touched her wrist!
Now, what 's a smile to you? Poor candle that lights up
The decent household gloom which sends you out to sup.
A tear? worse! warns that health requires you keep aloof
From nuptial chamber, since rain penetrates the roof!
Soul, body got and gained, inalienably safe
Your own, become despised; more worth has any waif
Or stray from neighbor's pale: pouch that, — 't is pleasure, pride,
Novelty, property, and larceny beside!
Preposterous thought! to find no value fixed in things,
To covet all you see, hear, dream of, till fate brings
About that, what you want, you gain; then follows change.
Give you the sun to keep, forthwith must fancy range:
A goodly lamp, no doubt, — yet might you catch her hair
And capture, as she frisks, the fen-fire dancing there!
What do I say? at least a meteor 's half in heaven;
Provided filth but shine, my husband hankers even
After putridity that 's phosphorescent, cribs
The rustic's tallow-rush, makes spoil of urchins' squibs,
In short prefers to me — chaste, temperate, serene —
What sputters green and blue, this fizgig called Fifine!' "

XXXIV.

So all your sex mistake! Strange that so plain a fact
Should raise such dire debate! Few families were racked

By torture self-supplied, did Nature grant but this —
That women comprehend mental analysis !

XXXV.

Elvire, do you recall when, years ago, our home
The intimation reached, a certain pride of Rome,
Authenticated piece, in the third, last and best
Manner, — whatever fools and connoisseurs contest,—
No particle disturbed by rude restorer's touch,
The palaced picture-pearl, so long eluding clutch
Of creditor, at last, the Rafael might — could we
But come to terms — change lord, pass from the Prince to me ?
I think you recollect my fever of a year :
How the Prince would, and how he would not ; now, — too dear
That promise was, he made his grandsire so long since,
Rather to boast " I own a Rafael " than " am Prince ! "
And now, the fancy soothed — if really sell he must
His birthright for a mess of pottage — such a thrust
I' the vitals of the Prince were mollified by balm,
Could he prevail upon his stomach to bear qualm,
And bequeath Liberty (because a purchaser
Was ready with the sum — a trifle !) yes, transfer
His heart at all events to that land where, at least,
Free institutions reign ! And so, its price increased
Five-fold (Americans are such importunates !),
Soon must his Rafael start for the United States.
O alternating bursts of hope now, then despair !
At last, the bargain 's struck, I 'm all but beggared, there
The Rafael faces me, in fine, no dream at all,
My housemate, evermore to glorify my wall.
A week must pass, before heart-palpitations sink,

In gloating o'er my gain, so late I edged the brink
Of doom; a fortnight more, I spent in Paradise:
"Was outline e'er so true, could coloring entice
So calm, did harmony and quiet so avail?
How right, how resolute, the action tells the tale!"
A month, I bid my friends congratulate their best:
"You happy Don!" (to me): "The blockhead!"
(to the rest):
"No doubt he thinks his daub original, poor dupe!"
Then I resume my life: one chamber must not coop
Man's life in, though it boast a marvel like my prize.
Next year, I saunter past with unaverted eyes,
Nay, loll and turn my back: perchance to overlook
With relish, leaf by leaf, Doré's last picture-book.

XXXVI.

Imagine that a voice reproached me from its frame:
"Here do I hang, and may! Your Rafael, just the
same,
'T is only you that change: no ecstasies of yore!
No purposed suicide distracts you any more!"
Prompt would my answer meet such frivolous attack:
"You misappropriate sensations. What men lack,
And labor to obtain, is hoped and feared about
After a fashion; what they once obtain, makes doubt,
Expectancy's old fret and fume, henceforward void.
But do they think to hold such havings unalloyed
By novel hopes and fears, of fashion just as new,
To correspond i' the scale? Nowise, I promise you!
Mine you are, therefore mine will be, as fit to cheer
My soul and glad my sense to-day as this-day-year.
So, any sketch or scrap, pochade, caricature,
Made in a moment, meant a moment to endure,
I snap at, seize, enjoy, then tire of, throw aside.

Find you in your old place. But if a servant cried
'Fire in the gallery!' — methinks, were I engaged
In Doré, elbow-deep, picture-books million-paged
To the four winds would pack, sped by the heartiest curse
Was ever launched from lip, to strew the universe.
Would not I brave the best o' the burning, bear away
Either my perfect piece in safety, or else stay
And share its fate, be made its martyr nor repine?
Inextricably wed, such ashes mixed with mine!"

XXXVII.

For which I get the eye, the hand, the heart, the whole
O' the wondrous wife again!

XXXVIII.

But no, play out your *rôle*
I' the pageant! 'T is not fit your phantom leave the stage:
I want you, there, to make you, here, confess you wage
Successful warfare, pique those proud ones, and advance
Claim to . . . equality? nay, but predominance
In *physique* o'er them all, where Helen heads the scene
Closed by its tiniest of tail-tips, pert Fifine.
How ravishingly pure you stand in pale constraint!
My new-created shape, without or touch or taint,
Inviolate of life and worldliness and sin —
Fettered, I hold my flower, her own cup's weight would win
From off the tall slight stalk a-top of which she turns
And trembles, makes appeal to one who roughly earns
Her thanks instead of blame (did lily only know),

By thus constraining length of lily, letting snow
Of cup-crown, that 's her face, look from its guardian stake,
Superb on all that crawls beneath, and mutely make
Defiance, with the mouth's white movement of disdain,
To all that stoops, retires and hovers round again !
How windingly the limbs delay to lead up, reach
Where, crowned, the head waits calm : as if reluctant, each,
That eye should traverse quick such lengths of loveliness,
From feet, which just are found embedded in the dress
Deep swathed about with folds and flowings virginal,
Up to the pleated breasts, rebellious 'neath their pall,
As if the vesture's snow were moulding sleep not death,
Must melt and so release ; whereat, from the fine sheath,
The flower-cup-crown starts free, the face is unconcealed,
And what shall now divert me, once the sweet face revealed,
From all I loved so long, so lingeringly left ?

XXXIX.

Because indeed your face fits into just the cleft
O' the heart of me, Elvire, makes right and whole once more
All that was half itself without you ! As before,
My truant finds its place ! Doubtlessly sea-shells yearn,
If plundered by sad chance : would pray their pearls return,
Let negligently slip away into the wave !
Never may eyes desist, those eyes so gray and grave,
From their slow sure supply of the effluent soul within !
And, would you humor me ? I dare to ask, unpin
The web of that brown hair ! O'erwash o' the sudden, but

As promptly, too, disclose, on either side, the jut
Of alabaster brow! So part rich rillets dyed
Deep by the woodland leaf, when down they pour, each side
O' the rock-top, pushed by Spring!

XL.

"And where i' the world is all
This wonder, you detail so trippingly, espied?
My mirror would reflect a tall, thin, pale, deep-eyed
Personage, pretty once, it may be, doubtless still
Loving, — a certain grace yet lingers, if you will, —
But all this wonder, where?"

XLI.

Why, where but in the sense
And soul of me, Art's judge? Art is my evidence
That something was, is, might be; but no more thing itself,
Than flame is fuel. Once the verse-book laid on shelf,
The picture turned to wall, the music fled from ear, —
Each beauty, born of each, grows clearer and more clear,
Mine henceforth, ever mine!

XLII.

But if I would re-trace
Effect, in Art, to cause, — corroborate, erase
What 's right or wrong i' the lines, test fancy in my brain
By fact which gave it birth? I re-peruse in vain
The verse, I fail to find that vision of delight
I' the Bazzi's lost-profile, eye-edge so exquisite.
And, music: what? that burst of pillared cloud by day

And pillared fire by night, was product, must we say,
Of modulating just, by enharmonic change, —
The augmented sixth resolved, — from out the straighter range
Of D sharp minor, — leap of disimprisoned thrall, —
Into thy light and life, D major natural?

XLIII.

Elvire, will you partake in what I shall impart?
I seem to understand the way heart chooses heart
By help of the outside form, — a reason for our wild
Diversity in choice, — why each grows reconciled
To what is absent, what superfluous in the mask
Of flesh that 's meant to yield, — did nature ply her task
As artist should, — precise the features of the soul,
Which, if in any case they found expression, whole
I' the traits, would give a type, undoubtedly display
A novel, true, distinct perfection in its way.
Never shall I believe any two souls were made
Similar; granting, then, each soul of every grade
Was meant to be itself, prove in itself complete
And, in completion, good, — nay, best o' the kind, — as meet
Needs must it be that show on the outside correspond
With inward substance, — flesh, the dress which soul has donned,
Exactly reproduce, — were only justice done
Inside and outside too, — types perfect every one.
How happens it that here we meet a mystery
Insoluble to man, a plaguy puzzle? Why
Each soul is either made imperfect, and deserves
As rude a face to match; or else a bungler swerves,
And nature, on a soul worth rendering aright,
Works ill, or proves perverse, or, in her own despite,

— Here too much, there too little, — bids each face, more or less,
Retire from beauty, make approach to ugliness?
And yet succeeds the same: since, what is wanting to success,
If somehow every face, no matter how deform,
Evidence, to some one of hearts on earth, that, warm
Beneath the veriest ash, there hides a spark of soul
Which, quickened by love's breath, may yet pervade the whole
O' the gray, and, free again, be fire? — of worth the same,
Howe'er produced, for, great or little, flame is flame.
A mystery, whereof solution is to seek.

XLIV.

I find it in the fact that each soul, just as weak
Its own way as its fellow, — departure from design
As flagrant in the flesh, — goes striving to combine
With what shall right the wrong, the under or above
The standard: supplement unloveliness by love.
— Ask Plato else! And this corroborates the sage,
That Art, — which I may style the love of loving, rage
Of knowing, seeing, feeling the absolute truth of things
For truth's sake, whole and sole, not any good, truth brings
The knower, seer, feeler, beside, — instinctive Art
Must fumble for the whole, once fixing on a part
However poor, surpass the fragment, and aspire
To reconstruct thereby the ultimate entire.
Art, working with a will, discards the superflux,
Contributes to defect, toils on till, — *fiat lux*, —
There's the restored, the prime, the individual type!

XLV.

Look, for example now ! This piece of broken pipe
(Some shipman's solace erst) shall act as crayon ; and
What tablet better serves my purpose than the sand ?
— Smooth slab whereon I draw, no matter with what skill,
A face, and yet another, and yet another still.
There lie my three prime types of beauty !

XLVI.

Laugh your best !
" Exaggeration and absurdity ? " Confessed !
Yet, what may that face mean, no matter for its nose,
A yard long, or its chin, a foot short ?

XLVII.

" You suppose,
Horror ? " Exactly ! What 's the odds if, more or less
By yard or foot, the features do manage to express
Such meaning in the main ? Were I of Gérôme's force,
Nor feeble as you see, quick should my crayon course
O'er outline, curb, excite, till, — so completion speeds
With Gérôme well at work, — observe how brow recedes,
Head shudders back on spine, as if one haled the hair,
Would have the full-face front what pin-point eye's sharp stare
Announces ; mouth agape to drink the flowing fate,
While chin protrudes to meet the burst o' the wave elate
Almost, spurred on to brave necessity, expend
All life left, in one flash, as fire does at its end.
Retrenchment and addition effect a masterpiece,

Not change i' the motive: here diminish, there increase —
And who wants Horror, has it.

XLVIII.

Who wants some other show
Of soul, may seek elsewhere — this second of the row?
What does it give for germ, monadic mere intent
Of mind in face, faint first of meanings ever meant?
Why, possibly, a grin, that, strengthened, grows a laugh;
That, softened, leaves a smile; that, tempered, bids you quaff
At such a magic cup as English Reynolds once
Compounded: for the witch pulls out of you response
Like Garrick's to Thalia, however due may be
Your homage claimed by that stiff-stoled Melpomene!

XLIX.

And just this one face more! Pardon the bold pretence!
May there not lurk some hint, struggle toward evidence
In that compressed mouth, those strained nostrils, steadfast eyes
Of utter passion, absolute self-sacrifice,
Which, — could I but subdue the wild grotesque, refine
That bulge of brow, make blunt that nose's aquiline,
And let, although compressed, a point of pulp appear
I' the mouth, — would give at last the portrait of Elvire?

L.

Well, and if so succeed hand-practice on awry
Preposterous art-mistake, shall soul-proficiency
Despair, — when exercised on nature, which at worst
Always implies success, however crossed and curst

By failure, — such as art would emulate in vain ?
Shall any soul despair of setting free again
Trait after trait, until the type as wholly start
Forth, visible to sense, as that minutest part,
(Whate'er the chance) which first arresting eye, warned soul
That, under wrong enough and ravage, lay the whole
O' the loveliness it "loved" — I take the accepted phrase ?

LI.

So I account for tastes : each chooses, none gainsays
The fancy of his fellow, a paradise for him,
A hell for all beside. You can but crown the brim
O' the cup ; if it be full, what matters less or more ?
Let each, i' the world, amend his love, as I, o' the shore
My sketch, and the result as undisputed be !
Their handiwork to them, and my Elvire to me :
— Result more beautiful than beauty's self, when lo,
What was my Rafael turns my Michelagnolo !

LII.

For, we two boast, beside our pearl, a diamond.
I' the palace-gallery, the corridor beyond,
Upheaves itself a marble, a magnitude man-shaped
As snow might be. One hand, — the Master's, — smoothed and scraped
That mass, he hammered on and hewed at, till he hurled
Life out of death, and left a challenge : for the world,
Death still, — since who shall dare, close to the image, say
If this be purposed Art, or mere mimetic play

Of Nature? — wont to deal with crag or cloud, as stuff
To fashion novel forms, like forms we know, enough
For recognition, but enough unlike the same,
To leave no hope ourselves may profit by her game;
Death therefore to the world. Step back a pace or two!
And then, who dares dispute the gradual birth its due
Of breathing life, or breathless immortality,
Where out she stands, and yet stops short, half bold, half shy,
Hesitates on the threshold of things, since partly blent
With stuff she needs must quit, her native element
I' the mind o' the Master, — what's the creature, dear-divine
Yet earthly-awful too, so manly-feminine,
Pretends this white advance? What startling brain-escape
Of Michelagnolo takes elemental shape?
I think he meant the daughter of the old man o' the sea,
Emerging from her wave, goddess Eidotheé —
She who, in elvish sport, spite with benevolence
Mixed Mab-wise up, must needs instruct the Hero whence
Salvation dawns o'er that mad misery of his isle.
Yes, she imparts to him, by what a pranksome wile
He may surprise her sire, asleep beneath a rock,
When he has told their tale, amid his web-foot flock
Of sea-beasts, "fine fat seals with bitter breath!" laughs she
At whom she likes to save, no less: Eidotheé,
Whom you shall never face evolved, in earth, in air,
In wave; but, manifest i' the soul's domain, why, there
She ravishingly moves to meet you, all through aid

O' the soul! Bid shine what should, dismiss into the shade
What should not be, — and there triumphs the paramount
Emprise o' the Master! But, attempt to make account
Of what the sense, without soul's help, perceives? I bought
That work — (despite plain proof, whose hand it was had wrought
I' the rough: I think we trace the tool of triple tooth,
Here, there and everywhere) — bought dearly that uncouth
Unwieldy bulk, for just ten dollars — "Bulk, would fetch —
Converted into lime — some five pauls!" grinned a wretch,
Who, bound on business, paused to hear the bargaining,
And would have pitied me "but for the fun o' the thing!"

LIII.

Shall such a wretch be — you? Must — while I show Elvire
Shaming all other forms, seen as I see her here
I' the soul, — this other-you perversely look outside,
And ask me, "Where i' the world is charm to be descried
I' the tall thin personage, with paled eye, pensive face,
Any amount of love, and some remains of grace?"
See yourself in my soul!

LIV.

And what a world for each
Must somehow be i' the soul, — accept that mode of speech, —

Whether an aura gird the soul, wherein it seems
To float and move, a belt of all the glints and gleams
It struck from out that world, its weaklier fellows found
So dead and cold; or whether these not so much surround,
As pass into the soul itself, add worth to worth,
As wine enriches blood, and straightway send it forth,
Conquering and to conquer, through all eternity,
That's battle without end.

LV.

I search but cannot see
What purpose serves the soul that strives, or world it tries
Conclusions with, unless the fruit of victories
Stay, one and all, stored up and guaranteed its own
Forever, by some mode whereby shall be made known
The gain of every life. Death reads the title clear —
What each soul for itself conquered from out things here:
Since, in the seeing soul, all worth lies, I assert, —
And naught i' the world, which, save for soul that sees, inert
Was, is, and would be ever, — stuff for transmuting, — null
And void until man's breath evoke the beautiful —
But, touched aright, prompt yields each particle its tongue
Of elemental flame, — no matter whence flame sprung
From gums and spice, or else from straw and rottenness,
So long as soul has power to make them burn, express

What lights and warms henceforth, leaves only ash behind,
Howe'er the chance: if soul be privileged to find
Food so soon that, by first snatch of eye, suck of breath,
It can absorb pure life: or, rather, meeting death
I' the shape of ugliness, by fortunate recoil
So put on its resource, it find therein a foil
For a new birth of life, the challenged soul's response
To ugliness and death, — creation for the nonce.

LVI.

I gather heart through just such conquests of the soul,
Through evocation out of that which, on the whole,
Was rough, ungainly, partial accomplishment, at best,
And — what, at worst, save failure to spit at and detest? —
— Through transference of all, achieved in visible things,
To where, secured from wrong, rest soul's imaginings —
Through ardor to bring help just where completion halts,
Do justice to the purpose, ignore the slips and faults —
And, last, through waging with deformity a fight
Which wrings thence, at the end, precise its opposite.
I praise the loyalty o' the scholar, — stung by taunt
Of fools "Does this evince thy Master men so vaunt?
Did he then perpetrate the plain abortion here?"
Who cries "His work am I! full fraught by him, I clear
His fame from each result of accident and time,
Myself restore his work to its fresh morning-prime,
Not daring touch the mass of marble, fools deride,

But putting my idea in plaster by its side,
His, since mine; I, he made, vindicate who made me!"

LVII.

For, you must know, I too achieved Eidotheé,
In silence and by night — dared justify the lines
Plain to my soul, although, to sense, that triple-tine's
Achievement halt half-way, break down, or leave a blank.
If she stood forth at last, the Master was to thank!
Yet may there not have smiled approval in his eyes —
That one at least was left who, born to recognize
Perfection in the piece imperfect, worked, that night,
In silence, such his faith, until the apposite
Design was out of him, truth palpable once more?
And then, — for at one blow, its fragments strewed the floor, —
Recalled the same to live within his soul as heretofore.

LVIII.

And, even as I hold and have Eidotheé,
I say, I cannot think that gain, — which would not be
Except a special soul had gained it, — that such gain
Can ever be estranged, do aught but appertain
Immortally, by right firm, indefeasible,
To who performed the feat, through God's grace and man's will!
Gain, never shared by those who practised with earth's stuff,
And spoiled whate'er they touched, leaving its roughness rough,
Its blankness bare, and, when the ugliness opposed,
Either struck work or laughed "He doted or he dozed!"

LIX.

While, oh, how all the more will love become intense
Hereafter, when "to love" means yearning to dispense,
Each soul, its own amount of gain through its own mode
Of practising with life, upon some soul which owed
Its treasure, all diverse and yet in worth the same,
To new work and changed way! Things furnish you rose-flame,
Which burn up red, green, blue, nay, yellow more than needs,
For me, I nowise doubt; why doubt a time succeeds
When each one may impart, and each receive, both share
The chemic secret, learn, — where I lit force, why there
You drew forth lambent pity, — where I found only food
For self-indulgence, you still blew a spark at brood
I' the grayest ember, stopped not till self-sacrifice imbued
Heaven's face with flame? What joy, when each may supplement
The other, changing each as changed, till, wholly blent,
Our old things shall be new, and, what we both ignite,
Fuse, lose the varicolor in achromatic white!
Exemplifying law, apparent even now
In the eternal progress, — love's law, which I avow
And thus would formulate: each soul lives, longs and works

For itself, by itself, — because a lodestar lurks,
An other than itself, — in whatsoe'er the niche
Of mistiest heaven it hide, whoe'er the Glumdalclich
May grasp the Gulliver: or it, or he, or she —
Theosutos e broteios eper kekramene,—
(For fun's sake, where the phrase has fastened, leave it fixed!
So soft it says, — "God, man, or both together mixed"!
The, guessed at through the flesh, by parts which prove the whole,
This constitutes the soul discernible by soul
— Elvire, by me!

LX.

"And then" — (pray you, permit remain
This hand upon my arm! — your cheek dried, if you deign,
Choosing my shoulder) — "then" — (Stand up for boldly state
The objection in its length and breadth!) "you abdicate,
With boast yet on your lip, soul's empire, and accept
The rule of sense; the Man, from monarch's throne has stept —
Leapt, rather, at one bound, to base, and there lies, Brute.
You talk of soul, — how soul, in search of soul to suit,
Must needs review the sex, the army, rank and file
Of womankind, report no face nor form so vile
But that a certain worth, by certain signs, may thence
Evolve itself and stand confessed — to soul — by sense.
Sense? Oh, the loyal bee endeavors for the hive!

Disinterested hunts the flower-field through, alive
Not one mean moment, no, — suppose on flower he light, —
To his peculiar drop, petal-dew perquisite,
Matter-of-course snatched snack: unless he taste, how try?
This, light on tongue-tip laid, allows him pack his thigh,
Transport all he counts prize, provision for the comb,
Food for the future day, — a banquet, but at home!
Soul? Ere you reach Fifine's, some flesh may be to pass!
That bombèd brow, that eye, a kindling chrysopras, 931
Beneath its stiff black lash, inquisitive how speeds
Each functionary limb, how play of foot succeeds,
And how you let escape or duly sympathize
With gastroknemian grace, — true, your soul tastes and tries,
And trifles time with these, but, fear not, will arrive
At essence in the core, bring honey home to hive,
Brain-stock and heart-stuff both — to strike objectors dumb —
Since only soul affords the soul fit pabulum!
Be frank for charity! Who is it you deceive — 940
Yourself or me or God, with all this make-believe?"

LXI.

And frank I will respond as you interrogate.
Ah, Music, wouldst thou help! Words struggle with the weight
So feebly of the False, thick element between
Our soul, the True, and Truth! which, but that intervene
False shows of things, were reached as easily by thought
Reducible to word, as now by yearnings wrought

Up with thy fine free force, oh Music, that canst thrid,
Electrically win a passage through the lid
Of earthly sepulchre, our words may push against,
Hardly transpierce as thou! Not dissipate, thou deign'st,
So much as tricksily elude what words attempt
To heave away, i' the mass, and let the soul, exempt
From all that vapory obstruction, view, instead
Of glimmer underneath, a glory overhead.
Not feebly, like our phrase, against the barrier go
In suspirative swell the authentic notes I know,
By help whereof, I would our souls were found without
The pale, above the dense and dim which breeds the doubt!
But Music, dumb for you, withdraws her help from me;
And, since to weary words recourse again must be,
At least permit they rest their burthen here and there,
Music-like: cover space! My answer, — need you care
If it exceed the bounds, reply to questioning
You never meant should plague? Once fairly on the wing,
Let me flap far and wide!

LXII.

For this is just the time,
The place, the mood in you and me, when all things chime.
Clash forth life's common chord, whence, list how there ascend
Harmonics far and faint, till our perception end, —
Reverberated notes whence we construct the scale
Embracing what we know and feel and are! How fail
To find or, better, lose your question, in this quick
Reply which nature yields, ample and catholic?

For, arm in arm, we two have reached, nay, passed, you see,
The village-precinct ; sun sets mild on Sainte Marie —
We only catch the spire, and yet I seem to know
What 's hid i' the turn o' the hill : how all the graves must glow
Soberly, as each warms its little iron cross,
Flourished about with gold, and graced (if private loss
Be fresh) with stiff rope-wreath of yellow crisp bead-blooms
Which tempt down birds to pay their supper, mid the tombs,
With prattle good as song, amuse the dead awhile,
If couched they hear beneath the matted camomile!

LXIII.

Bid them good-bye before last friend has sung and supped!
Because we pick our path and need our eyes, — abrupt
Descent enough, — but here 's the beach, and there 's the bay,
And, opposite, the streak of Île Noirmoutier.
Thither the waters tend ; they freshen as they haste,
At feel o' the night-wind, though, by cliff and cliff embraced,
This breadth of blue retains its self-possession still ;
As you and I intend to do, who take our fill
Of sights and sounds — soft sound, the countless hum and skip
Of insects we disturb, and that good fellowship
Of rabbits our foot-fall sends huddling, each to hide
He best knows how and where ; and what whirred past, wings wide ?

That was an owl, their young may justlier apprehend !
Though you refuse to speak, your beating heart, my friend,
I feel against my arm, — though your bent head forbids
A look into your eyes, yet, on my cheek, their lids
That ope and shut, soft send a silken thrill the same.
Well, out of all and each these nothings, comes — what came
Dften enough before, the something that would aim
Once more at the old mark : the impulse to at last
Succeed where hitherto was failure in the past,
And yet again essay the adventure. Clearlier sings
No bird to its couched corpse "Into the truth of things —
Out of their falseness rise, and reach thou, and remain ! "

LXIV.

"That rise into the true out of the false — explain ? "
May an example serve ? In yonder bay I bathed,
This sunny morning : swam my best, then hung, half swathed
With chill, and half with warmth, i' the channel's mid-most deep :
You know how one — not treads, but stands in water ? Keep
Body and limbs below, hold head back, uplift chin,
And, for the rest, leave care ! If brow, eyes, mouth, should win
Their freedom, — excellent ! If they must brook the surge,
No matter though they sink, let but the nose emerge.
So, all of me in brine lay soaking : did I care
One jot ? I kept alive by man's due breath of air
I' the nostrils, high and dry. At times, o'er these would run
The ripple, even wash the wavelet, — morning's sun

Tempted advance, no doubt: and always flash of
froth,
Fish-outbreak, bubbling by, would find me nothing loth
To rise and look around; then all was overswept
With dark and death at once. But trust the old adept!
Back went again the head, a merest motion made,
Fin-fashion, either hand, and nostril soon conveyed
Assurance light and life were still in reach as erst:
Always the last and, — wait and watch, — sometimes
the first.
Try to ascend breast-high? wave arms wide free of
tether?
Be in the air and leave the water altogether?
Under went all again, till I resigned myself
To only breathe the air, that's footed by an elf,
And only swim the water, that's native to a fish.
But there is no denying that, ere I curbed my wish,
And schooled my restive arms, salt entered mouth and
eyes
Often enough — sun, sky, and air so tantalize!
Still, the adept swims, this accorded, that denied;
Can always breathe, sometimes see and be satisfied!

LXV.

I liken to this play o' the body, — fruitless strife
To slip the sea and hold the heaven, — my spirit's life
'Twixt false, whence it would break, and true, where
it would bide.
I move in, yet resist, am upborne every side
By what I beat against, an element too gross
To live in, did not soul duly obtain her dose
Of life-breath, and inhale from truth's pure plenitude
Above her, snatch and gain enough to just illude
With hope that some brave bound may baffle evermore

The obstructing medium, make who swam henceforward soar:
— Gain scarcely snatched when, foiled by the very effort, sowse,
Underneath ducks the soul, her truthward yearnings dowse
Deeper in falsehood! ay, but fitted less and less
To bear in nose and mouth old briny bitterness
Proved alien more and more: since each experience proves
Air — the essential good, not sea, wherein who moves
Must thence, in the act, escape, apart from will or wish.
Move a mere hand to take waterweed, jelly-fish,
Upward you tend! And yet our business with the sea
Is not with air, but just o' the water, watery:
We must endure the false, no particle of which
Do we acquaint us with, but up we mount a pitch
Above it, find our head reach truth, while hands explore
The false below: so much while here we bathe, — no more!

LXVI.

Now, there is one prime point (hear and be edified!)
One truth more true for me than any truth beside —
To-wit, that I am I, who have the power to swim,
The skill to understand the law whereby each limb
May bear to keep immersed, since, in return, made sure
That its mere movement lifts head clean through coverture.
By practice with the false, I reach the true? Why, thence
It follows, that the more I gain self-confidence,
Get proof I know the trick, can float, sink, rise, at will,
The better I submit to what I have the skill

To conquer in my turn, even now, and by and by
Leave wholly for the land, and there laugh, shake me dry
To last drop, saturate with noonday — no need more
Of wet and fret, plagued once: on Pornic's placid shore,
Abundant air to breathe, sufficient sun to feel!
Meantime I buoy myself: no whit my senses reel
When over me there breaks a billow; nor, elate
Too much by some brief taste, I quaff intemperate
The air, o'ertop breast-high the wave-environment.
Full well I know the thing I grasp, as if intent
To hold, — my wandering wave, — will not be grasped at all:
The solid-seeming grasped, the handful great or small
Must go to nothing, glide through fingers fast enough;
But none the less, to treat liquidity as stuff —
Though failure — certainly succeeds beyond its aim,
Sends head above, past thing that hands miss, all the same.

LXVII.

So with this wash o' the world, wherein life-long we drift;
We push and paddle through the foam by making shift
To breathe above at whiles when, after deepest duck
Down underneath the show, we put forth hand and pluck
At what seems somehow like reality — a soul.
I catch at this and that, to capture and control,
Presume I hold a prize, discover that my pains
Are run to naught: my hands are balked, my head regains
The surface where I breathe and look about, a space.
The soul that helped me mount? Swallowed up in the race

O' the tide, come who knows whence, gone gayly who knows where!
I thought the prize was mine; I flattered myself there.
It did its duty, though: I felt it, it felt me,
Or, where I look about and breathe, I should not be.
The main point is — the false fluidity was bound
Acknowledge that it frothed o'er substance, nowise found
Fluid, but firm and true. Man, outcast, "howls," — at rods? —
If "sent in playful spray a-shivering to his gods!"
Childishest childe, man makes thereby no bad exchange.
Stay with the flat-fish, thou! We like the upper range
Where the "gods" live, perchance the dæmons also dwell:
Where operates a Power, which every throb and swell
Of human heart invites that human soul approach,
"Sent" near and nearer still, however "spray" encroach
On "shivering" flesh below, to altitudes, which gained,
Evil proves good, wrong right, obscurity explained,
And "howling" childishness. Whose howl have we to thank,
If all the dogs 'gan bark and puppies whine, till sank
Each yelper's tail 'twixt legs? for Huntsman Common-sense
Came to the rescue, bade prompt thwack of thong dispense
Quiet i' the kennel; taught that ocean might be blue,
And rolling and much more, and yet the soul have, too,
Its touch of God's own flame, which He may so expand
"Who measurèd the waters i' the hollow of His hand"
That ocean's self shall dry, turn dew-drop in respect
Of all-triumphant fire, matter with intellect

Once fairly matched ; bade him who egged on hounds
to bay,
Go curse, i' the poultry yard, his kind : " there let him
lay "
The swan's one addled egg : which yet shall put to use,
Rub breast-bone warm against, so many a sterile goose !

LXVIII.

No, I want sky not sea, prefer the larks to shrimps,
And never dive so deep but that I get a glimpse
O' the blue above, a breath of the air around. Elvire,
I seize — by catching at the melted beryl here,
The tawny hair that just has trickled off, — Fifine !
Did not we two trip forth to just enjoy the scene,
The tumbling-troop arrayed, the strollers on their stage,
Drawn up and under arms, and ready to engage —
Dabble, and there an end, with foam and froth o'er
face,
Till suddenly Fifine suggested change of place ?
Now we taste æther, scorn the wave, and interchange
apace
No ordinary thoughts, but such as evidence
The cultivated mind in both. On what pretence
Are you and I to sneer at who lent help to hand,
And gave the lucky lift ?

LXIX.

Still sour ? I understand !
One ugly circumstance discredits my fair plan —
That Woman does the work : I waive the help of Man.
" Why should experiment be tried with only waves,
When solid spars float round ? Still some Thalassia
saves
Too pertinaciously, as though no Triton, bluff

As e'er blew brine from conch, were free to help enough!
Surely, to recognize a man, his mates serve best!
Why is there not the same or greater interest
In the strong spouse as in the pretty partner, pray,
Were recognition just your object, as you say,
Amid this element o' the false?"

LXX.

We come to terms.
I need to be proved true; and nothing so confirms
One's faith in the prime point that one 's alive, not dead,
In all Descents to Hell whereof I ever read,
As when a phantom there, male enemy or friend,
Or merely stranger-shade, is struck, is forced suspend
His passage: "You that breathe, along with us the ghosts?"
Here, why must it be still a woman that accosts?

LXXI.

Because, one woman's worth, in that respect, such hairy hosts
Of the other sex and sort! Men? Say you have the power
To make them yours, rule men, throughout life's little hour,
According to the phrase; what follows? Men, you make,
By ruling them, your own: each man for his own sake
Accepts you as his guide, avails him of what worth
He apprehends in you to sublimate his earth
With fire: content, if so you convoy him through night,
That you shall play the sun, and he, the satellite,

Pilfer your light and heat and virtue, starry pelf,
While, caught up by your course, he turns upon himself.
Women rush into you, and there remain absorbed.
Beside, 't is only men completely formed, full-orbed,
Are fit to follow track, keep pace, illustrate so
The leader: any sort of woman may bestow
Her atom on the star, or clod she counts for such, —
Each little making less bigger by just that much.
Women grow you, while men depend on you at best.
And what dependence! Bring and put him to the test,
Your specimen disciple, a handbreadth separate
From you, he almost seemed to touch before! Abate
Complacency you will, I judge, at what 's divulged!
Some flabbiness you fixed, some vacancy outbulged,
Some — much — nay, all, perhaps, the outward man 's your work:
But, inside man? — find him, wherever he may lurk,
And where 's a touch of you in his true self?

LXXII.

I wish
Some wind would waft this way a glassy bubble-fish
O' the kind the sea inflates, and show you, once detached
From wave . . . or no, the event is better told than watched:
Still may the thing float free, globose and opaline
All over, save where just the amethysts combine
To blue their best, rim-round the sea-flower with a tinge
Earth's violet never knew! Well, 'neath that gem-tipped fringe,
A head lurks — of a kind — that acts as stomach too;

As e'er blew brine from conch, were free to help
enough!
Surely, to recognize a man, his mates serve best!
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By ruling them, your own: each man for his own sake
Accepts you as his guide, avails him of what worth
He apprehends in you to sublimate his earth
With fire: content, if so you convoy him through
night,
That you shall play the sun, and he, the satellite,

Pilfer your light and heat and virtue, starry pelf,
While, caught up by your course, he turns upon himself.
Women rush into you, and there remain absorbed.
Beside, 't is only men completely formed, full-orbed,
Are fit to follow track, keep pace, illustrate so
The leader: any sort of woman may bestow
Her atom on the star, or clod she counts for such, —
Each little making less bigger by just that much.
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Still may the thing float free, globose and opaline
All over, save where just the amethysts combine
To blue their best, rim-round the sea-flower with a tinge
Earth's violet never knew! Well, 'neath that gem-tipped fringe,
A head lurks — of a kind — that acts as stomach too;

Then comes the emptiness which out the water blew
So big and belly-like, but, dry of water drained,
Withers away nine-tenths. Ah, but a tenth remained:
That was the creature's self: no more akin to sea,
Poor rudimental head and stomach, you agree,
Than sea's akin to sun who yonder dips his edge.

LXXIII.

But take the rill which ends a race o'er yonder ledge
O' the fissured cliff, to find its fate in smoke below!
Disengage that, and ask — what news of life, you know
It led, that long lone way, through pasture, plain and waste?
All's gone to give the sea! no touch of earth, no taste
Of air, reserved to tell how rushes used to bring
The butterfly and bee, and fisher-bird that's king
O' the purple kind, about the snow-soft silver-sweet
Infant of mist and dew; only these atoms fleet,
Embittered evermore, to make the sea one drop
More big thereby — if thought keep count where sense must stop.

LXXIV.

The full-blown ingrate, mere recipient of the brine,
That takes all and gives naught, is Man; the feminine
Rillet that, taking all and giving naught in turn,
Goes headlong to her death i' the sea, without concern
For the old inland life, snow-soft and silver-clear,
That's woman — typified from Fifine to Elvire.

LXXV.

Then, how diverse the modes prescribed to who would deal
With either kind of creature! 'T is Man, you seek to seal

Your very own ? Resolve, for first step, to discard
Nine-tenths of what you are ! To make, you must be marred, —
To raise your race, must stoop, — to teach them aught, must learn
Ignorance, meet half-way what most you hope to spurn
I' the sequel. Change yourself, dissimulate the thought
And vulgarize the word, and see the deed be brought
To look like nothing done with any such intent
As teach men — though perchance it teach, by accident !
So may you master men : assured that if you show
One point of mastery, departure from the low
And level, — head or heart-revolt at long disguise,
Immurement, stifling soul in mediocrities, —
If inadvertently a gesture, much more, word
Reveal the hunter no companion for the herd,
His chance of capture 's gone. Success means, they may snuff,
Examine, and report, — a brother, sure enough,
Disports him in brute-guise ; for skin is truly skin,
Horns, hoofs are hoofs and horns, and all, outside and in,
Is veritable beast, whom fellow-beasts resigned
May follow, made a prize in honest pride, behind
One of themselves and not creation's upstart lord!
Well, there 's your prize i' the pound — much joy may it afford
My Indian ! Make survey and tell me, — was it worth
You acted part so well, went all-fours upon earth
The live-long day, brayed, belled, and all to bring to pass
That stags should deign eat hay when winter stints them grass ?

LXXVI.

So much for men, and how disguise may make them mind
Their master. But you have to deal with womankind?
Abandon stratagem for strategy! Cast quite
The vile disguise away, try truth clean-opposite
Such creep-and-crawl, stand forth all man and, might it chance,
Somewhat of angel too! — whate'er inheritance,
Actual on earth, in heaven prospective, be your boast,
Lay claim to! Your best self revealed at uttermost, —
That's the wise way o' the strong! And e'en should falsehood tempt
The weaker sort to swerve, — at least the lie's exempt
From slur, that's loathlier still, of aiming to debase
Rather than elevate its object. Mimic grace,
Not make deformity your mask! Be sick by stealth,
Nor traffic with disease — malingering in health!
No more of: "Countrymen, I boast me one like you —
My lot, the common strength, the common weakness too!
I think the thoughts you think; and if I have the knack
Of fitting thoughts to words, you peradventure lack,
Envy me not the chance, yourselves more fortunate!
Many the loaded ship self-sunk through treasure-freight,
Many the pregnant brain brought never child to birth,
Many the great heart broke beneath its girdle-girth!
Be mine the privilege to supplement defect,
Give dumbness voice, and let the laboring intellect
Find utterance in word, or possibly in deed!
What though I seem to go before? 't is you that lead!
I follow what I see so plain — the general mind

Projected pillar-wise, flame kindled by the kind,
Which dwarfs the unit — me — to insignificance !
Halt you, I stop forthwith, — proceed, I too advance ! "

LXXVII.

Ay, that 's the way to take with men you wish to lead,
Instruct and benefit. Small prospect you succeed
With women so ! Be all that 's great and good and wise,
August, sublime — swell out your frog the right ox-size —
He 's buoyed like a balloon, to soar, not burst, you 'll see !
The more you prove yourself, less fear the prize will flee
The captor. Here you start after no pompous stag
Who condescends be snared, with toss of horn, and brag
Of bray, and ramp of hoof; you have not to subdue
The foe through letting him imagine he snares you !
'T is rather with . . .

LXXVIII.

Ah, thanks ! quick — where the dipping disk
Shows red against the rise and fall o' the fin ! there frisk
In shoal the — porpoises ? Dolphins, they shall and must
Cut through the freshening clear — dolphins, my instance just !
'T is fable, therefore truth : who has to do with these,
Needs never practise trick of going hands and knees

As beasts require. Art fain the fish to captivate ?
Gather thy greatness round, Arion ! Stand in state,
As when the banqueting thrilled conscious — like a rose
Throughout its hundred leaves at that approach it knows
Of music in the bird — while Corinth grew one breast
A-throb for song and thee ; nay, Periander pressed
The Methymnæan hand, and felt a king indeed, and guessed
How Phœbus' self might give that great mouth of the gods
Such a magnificence of song ! The pillar nods,
Rocks roof, and trembles door, gigantic, post and jamb,
As harp and voice rend air — the shattering dithyramb !
So stand thou, and assume the robe that tingles yet
With triumph ; strike the harp, whose every golden fret
Still smoulders with the flame, was late at fingers' end —
So, standing on the bench o' the ship, let voice expend
Thy soul, sing, unalloyed by meaner mode, thine own,
The Orthian lay ; then leap from music's lofty throne,
Into the lowest surge, make fearlessly thy launch !
Whatever storm may threat, some dolphin will be stanch !
Whatever roughness rage, some exquisite sea-thing
Will surely rise to save, will bear — palpitating —
One proud humility of love beneath its load —
Stem tide, part wave, till both roll on, thy jewell'd road
Of triumph, and the grim o' the gulf grow wonder-white
I' the phosphorescent wake ; and still the exquisite
Sea-thing stems on, saves still, palpitatingly thus,
Lands safe at length its load of love at Tænarus,
True woman-creature !

LXXIX.

Man? Ah, would you prove what power
Marks man, — what fruit his tree may yield, beyond the sour
And stinted crab, he calls love-apple, which remains
After you toil and moil your utmost, — all, love gains
By lavishing manure? — try quite the other plan!
And, to obtain the strong true product of a man,
Set him to hate a little! Leave cherishing his root,
And rather prune his branch, nip off the pettiest shoot
Superfluous on his bough! I promise, you shall learn
By what grace came the goat, of all beasts else, to earn
Such favor with the god o' the grape: 't was only he
Who, browsing on its tops, first stung fertility
Into the stock's heart, stayed much growth of tendril-twine,
Some faintish flower, perhaps, but gained the indignant wine,
Wrath of the red press! Catch the puniest of the kind —
Man-animalcule, starved body, stunted mind,
And, as you nip the blotch 'twixt thumb and finger-nail,
Admire how heaven above and earth below avail
No jot to soothe the mite, sore at God's prime offence
In making mites at all, — coax from its impotence
One virile drop of thought, or word, or deed, by strain
To propagate for once — which nature rendered vain,
Who lets first failure stay, yet cares not to record
Mistake that seems to cast opprobrium on the Lord!
Such were the gain from love's best pains! But let the elf
Be touched with hate, because some real man bears himself

Manlike in body and soul, and, since he lives, must thwart
And furify and set a-fizz this counterpart
O' the pismire that 's surprised to effervescence, if,
By chance, black bottle come in contact with chalk cliff,
Acid with alkali ! Then thrice the bulk, out blows
Our insect, does its kind, and cuckoo-spits some rose !

LXXX.

No — 't is ungainly work, the ruling men, at best !
The graceful instinct 's right : 't is women stand confessed
Auxiliary, the gain that never goes away,
Takes nothing and gives all : Elvire, Fifine, 't is they
Convince, — if little, much, no matter ! — one degree
The more, at least, convince unreasonable me
That I am, anyhow, a truth, though all else seem
And be not : if I dream, at least I know I dream.
The falsity, beside, is fleeting : I can stand
Still, and let truth come back, — your steadying touch of hand
Assists me to remain self-centred, fixed amid
All on the move. Believe in me, at once you bid
Myself believe that, since one soul has disengaged
Mine from the shows of things, so much is fact : I waged
No foolish warfare, then, with shades, myself a shade,
Here in the world — may hope my pains will be repaid !
How false things are, I judge : how changeable, I learn
When, where and how it is I shall see truth return,
That I expect to know, because Fifine knows me ! —
How much more, if Elvire !

LXXXI.

" And why not, only she ?
Since there can be for each, one Best, no more, such Best,

For body and mind of him, abolishes the rest
O' the simply Good and Better. You please select Elvire
To give you this belief in truth, dispel the fear
Yourself are, after all, as false as what surrounds ;
And why not be content ? When we two watched the rounds
The boatman made, 'twixt shoal and sandbank, yesterday,
As, at dead slack of tide, he chose to push his way,
With oar and pole, across the creek, and reach the isle
After a world of pains — my word provoked your smile,
Yet none the less deserved reply : ' 'T were wiser wait
The turn o' the tide, and find conveyance for his freight —
How easily — within the ship to purpose moored,
Managed by sails, not oars ! But no, — the man 's allured
By liking for the new and hard in his exploit !
First come shall serve ! He makes, — courageous and adroit, —
The merest willow-leaf of boat do duty, bear
His merchandise across : once over, needs he care
If folk arrive by ship, six hours hence, fresh and gay ? '
No : he scorns commonplace, affects the unusual way ;
And good Elvire is moored, with not a breath to flap
The yards of her, no lift of ripple to o'erlap
Keel, much less, prow. What care ? since here 's a cockle-shell,
Fifine, that 's taut and crank, and carries just as well
Such seamanship as yours ! ' '

LXXXII.

Alack, our life is lent,
From first to last, the whole, for this experiment
Of proving what I say — that we ourselves are true!
I would there were one voyage, and then no more to do
But tread the firmland, tempt the uncertain sea no more.
I would we might dispense with change of shore for shore
To evidence our skill, demonstrate — in no dream
It was, we tided o'er the trouble of the stream.
I would the steady voyage, and not the fitful trip, —
Elvire, and not Fifine, — might test our seamanship.
But why expend one's breath to tell you, change of boat
Means change of tactics too? Come see the same afloat
To-morrow, all the change, new stowage fore and aft
O' the cargo; then, to cross requires new sailor-craft!
To-day, one step from stern to bow keeps boat in trim:
To-morrow, some big stone, — or woe to boat and him! —
Must ballast both. That man stands for Mind, paramount
Throughout the adventure: ay, howe'er you make account,
'T is mind that navigates, — skips over, twists between
The bales i' the boat, — now gives importance to the mean,
And now abates the pride of life, accepts all fact,
Discards all fiction, — steers Fifine, and cries, i' the act,
"Thou art so bad, and yet so delicate a brown!
Wouldst tell no end of lies: I talk to smile or frown!
Wouldst rob me: do men blame a squirrel, lithe and sly,
For pilfering the nut she adds to hoard? Nor I.
Elvire is true, as truth, honesty's self, alack!

The worse! too safe the ship, the transport there and back
Too certain! one may loll and lounge and leave the helm,
Let wind and tide do work: no fear that waves o'erwhelm
The steady-going bark, as sure to feel her way
Blindfold across, reach land, next year as yesterday!
How can I but suspect, the true feat were to slip
Down side, transfer myself to cockle-shell from ship,
And try if, trusting to sea-tracklessness, I class
With those around whose breast grew oak and triple brass:
Who dreaded no degree of death, but, with dry eyes,
Surveyed the turgid main and its monstrosities —
And rendered futile so, the prudent Power's decree
Of separate earth and disassociating sea;
Since, how is it observed, if impious vessels leap
Across, and tempt a thing they should not touch — the deep?
(See Horace to the boat, wherein, for Athens bound,
When Virgil must embark — Jove keep him safe and sound! —
The poet bade his friend start on the watery road,
Much re-assured by this so comfortable ode.)

LXXXIII.

Then, never grudge my poor Fifine her compliment!
The rakish craft could slip her moorings in the tent,
And, hoisting every stitch of spangled canvas, steer
Through divers rocks and shoals, — in fine, deposit here
Your Virgil of a spouse, in Attica: yea, thrid
The mob of men, select the special virtue hid
In him, forsooth, and say — or rather, smile so sweet

"Of all the multitude, you — I prefer to cheat!
Are you for Athens bound? I can perform the trip,
Shove little pinnace off, while yon superior ship,
The Elvire, refits in port!" So, off we push from beach
Of Pornic town, and lo, ere eye can wink, we reach
The Long Walls, and I prove that Athens is no dream,
For there the temples rise! they are, they nowise seem!
Earth is not all one lie, this truth attests me true!
Thanks therefore to Fifine! Elvire, I 'm back with you!
Share in the memories! Embark I trust we shall
Together some fine day, and so, for good and all,
Bid Pornic town adieu, — then, just the strait to cross,
And we reach harbor, safe, in Iostephanos!

LXXXIV.

How quickly night comes! Lo, already 't is the land
Turns sea-like; overcrept by gray, the plains expand,
Assume significance; while ocean dwindles, shrinks
Into a pettier bound: its plash and plaint, methinks,
Six steps away, how both retire, as if their part
Were played, another force were free to prove her art,
Protagonist in turn! Are you unterrified?
All false, all fleeting too! And nowhere things abide,
And everywhere we strain that things should stay, — the one
Truth, that ourselves are true!

LXXXV.

A word, and I have done.
Is it not just our hate of falsehood, fleetingness,

And the mere part, things play, that constitutes express
The inmost charm of this Fifine and all her tribe?
Actors! We also act, but only they inscribe
Their style and title so, and preface, only they,
Performance with "A lie is all we do or say."
Wherein but there can be the attraction, Falsehood's bribe,
That wins so surely o'er to Fifine and her tribe
The liking, nay the love of who hate Falsehood most,
Except that these alone of mankind make their boast
"Frankly, we simulate!" To feign, means — to have grace
And so get gratitude! This ruler of the race,
Crowned, sceptred, stoled to suit, — 't is not that you detect
The cobbler in the king, but that he makes effect
By seeming the reverse of what you know to be
The man, the mind, whole form, fashion and quality.
Mistake his false for true, one minute, — there 's an end
Of the admiration! Truth, we grieve at or rejoice:
'T is only falsehood, plain in gesture, look and voice,
That brings the praise desired, since profit comes thereby.
The histrionic truth is in the natural lie.
Because the man who wept the tears was, all the time,
Happy enough; because the other man, a-grime
With guilt, was, at the least, as white as I and you;
Because the timid type of bashful maidhood, who
Starts at her own pure shade, already numbers seven
Born babes and, in a month, will turn their odd to even;
Because the saucy prince would prove, could you unfurl
Some yards of wrap, a meek and meritorious girl —
Precisely as you see success attained by each

O' the mimes, do you approve, not foolishly impeach
The falsehood!

LXXXVI.

That 's the first o' the truths found: all things, slow
Or quick i' the passage, come at last to that, you know!
Each has a false outside, whereby a truth is forced
To issue from within: truth, falsehood, are divorced
By the excepted eye, at the rare season, for
The happy moment. Life means — learning to abhor
The false, and love the true, truth treasured snatch by snatch,
Waifs counted at their worth. And when with strays they match
I' the parti-colored world, — when, under foul, shines fair,
And truth, displayed i' the point, flashes forth everywhere
I' the circle, manifest to soul, though hid from sense,
And no obstruction more affects this confidence, —
When faith is ripe for sight, — why, reasonably, then
Comes the great clearing-up. Wait threescore years and ten!

LXXXVII.

Therefore I prize stage-play, the honest cheating; thence
The impulse pricked, when fife and drum bade Fair commence,
To bid you trip and skip, link arm in arm with me,
Like husband and like wife, and so together see
The tumbling-troop arrayed, the strollers on their stage
Drawn up and under arms, and ready to engage.

And if I started thence upon abstruser themes . . .
Well, 't was a dream, pricked too!

LXXXVIII.

A poet never dreams:
We prose-folk always do: we miss the proper duct
For thoughts on things unseen, which stagnate and obstruct
The system, therefore; mind, sound in a body sane,
Keeps thoughts apart from facts, and to one flowing vein
Confines its sense of that which is not, but might be,
And leaves the rest alone. What ghosts do poets see?
What dæmons fear? what man or thing misapprehend?
Unchoked, the channel 's flush, the fancy 's free to spend
Its special self aright in manner, time and place.
Never believe that who create the busy race
O' the brain, bring poetry to birth, such act performed,
Feel trouble them, the same, such residue as warmed
My prosy blood, this morn, — intrusive fancies, meant
For outbreak and escape by quite another vent!
Whence follows that, asleep, my dreamings oft exceed
The bound. But you shall hear.

LXXXIX.

I smoked. The webs o' the weed,
With many a break i' the mesh, were floating to re-form
Cupola-wise above: chased thither by soft warm
Inflow of air without; since I — of mind to muse, to clench
The gain of soul and body, got by their noon-day drench

In sun and sea, — had flung both frames o' the window wide,
To soak my body still and let soul soar beside.
In came the country sounds and sights and smells — that fine
Sharp needle in the nose from our fermenting wine!
In came a dragon-fly with whir and stir, then out,
Off and away: in came, — kept coming, rather, — pout
Succeeding smile, and take-away still close on give, —
One loose long creeper-branch, tremblingly sensitive
To risks which blooms and leaves, — each leaf tongue-broad, each bloom
Mid-finger-deep, — must run by prying in the room
Of one who loves and grasps and spoils and speculates.
All so far plain enough to sight and sense: but, weights,
Measures and numbers, — ah, could one apply such test
To other visitants that came at no request
Of who kept open house, — to fancies manifold
From this four-cornered world, the memories new and old,
The antenatal prime experience — what know I? —
The initiatory love preparing us to die —
Such were a crowd to count, a sight to see, a prize
To turn to profit, were but fleshly ears and eyes
Able to cope with those o' the spirit!

XC.

Therefore, — since
Thought hankers after speech, while no speech may evince
Feeling like music, — mine, o'erburthened with each gift
From every visitant, at last resolved to shift

Its burthen to the back of some musician dead
And gone, who feeling once what I feel now, instead
Of words, sought sounds, and saved forever, in the same,
Truth that escapes prose, — nay, puts poetry to shame.
I read the note, I strike the key, I bid *record*
The instrument — thanks greet the veritable word!
And not in vain I urge: "O dead and gone away,
Assist who struggles yet, thy strength become my stay,
Thy record serve as well to register — I felt
And knew thus much of truth! With me, must knowledge melt
Into surmise and doubt and disbelief, unless
Thy music reassure — I gave no idle guess,
But gained a certitude I yet may hardly keep!
What care? since round is piled a monumental heap
Of music that conserves the assurance, thou as well
Wast certain of the same! thou, master of the spell,
Mad'st moonbeams marble, didst *record* what other men
Feel only to forget!" Who was it helped me, then?
What master's work first came responsive to my call,
Found my eye, fixed my choice?

XCI.

Why, Schumann's "Carnival!"
My choice chimed in, you see, exactly with the sounds
And sights of yestereve when, going on my rounds,
Where both roads join the bridge, I heard across the dusk
Creak a slow caravan, and saw arrive the husk
O' the spice-nut, which peeled off this morning, and displayed,
'Twixt tree and tree, a tent whence the red pennon made

Its vivid reach for home and ocean-idleness —
And where, my heart surmised, at that same moment,
— yes, —
Tugging her *tricot* on, — yet tenderly, lest stitch
Announce the crack of doom, reveal disaster which
Our Pornic's modest stock of merceries in vain
Were ransacked to retrieve, — there, cautiously a-strain,
(My heart surmised) must crouch in that tent's corner, curved
Like Spring-month's russet moon, some girl by fate reserved
To give me once again the electric snap and spark
Which prove, when finger finds out finger in the dark
O' the world, there 's fire and life and truth there, link but hands
And pass the secret on. Lo, link by link, expands
The circle, lengthens out the chain, till one embrace
Of high with low is found uniting the whole race,
Not simply you and me and our Fifine, but all
The world: the Fair expands into the Carnival,
And Carnival again to . . . ah, but that 's my dream!

XCII.

I somehow played the piece: remarked on each old theme
I' the new dress; saw how food o' the soul, the stuff that 's made
To furnish man with thought and feeling, is purveyed
Substantially the same from age to age, with change
Of the outside only for successive feasters. Range
The banquet-room o' the world, from the dim farthest head
O' the table, to its foot, for you and me be spread,
This merry morn, we find sufficient fare, I trow.

But, novel? Scrape away the sauce; and taste, below,
The verity o' the viand, — you shall perceive there went
To board-head just the dish which other condiment
Makes palatable now: guests came, sat down, fell-to,
Rose up, wiped mouth, went way, — lived, died, — and never knew
That generations yet should, seeking sustenance,
Still find the selfsame fare, with somewhat to enhance
Its flavor, in the kind of cooking. As with hates
And loves and fears and hopes, so with what emulates
The same, expresses hates, loves, fears and hopes in Art:
The forms, the themes — no one without its counterpart
Ages ago; no one but, mumbled the due time
I' the mouth of the eater, needs be cooked again in rhyme,
Dished up anew in paint, sauce-smothered fresh in sound,
To suit the wisdom-tooth, just cut, of the age, that 's found
With gums obtuse to gust and smack which relished so
The meat o' the meal folk made some fifty years ago.
But don't suppose the new was able to efface
The old without a struggle, a pang! The commonplace
Still clung about his heart, long after all the rest
O' the natural man, at eye and ear, was caught, confessed
The charm of change, although wry lip and wrinkled nose
Owned ancient virtue more conducive to repose
Than modern nothings roused to somethings by some shred

Of pungency, perchance garlic in amber's stead.
And so on, till one day, another age, by due
Rotation, pries, sniffs, smacks, discovers old is new,
And sauce, our sires pronounced insipid, proves again
Sole piquant, may resume its titillating reign —
With music, most of all the arts, since change is there
The law, and not the lapse : the precious means the rare,
And not the absolute in all good save surprise.
So I remarked upon our Schumann's victories
Over the commonplace, how faded phrase grew fine,
And palled perfection — piqued, upstartled by that brine,
His pickle — bit the mouth and burnt the tongue aright,
Beyond the merely good no longer exquisite :
Then took things as I found, and thanked without demur
The pretty piece — played through that movement, you prefer,
Where dance and shuffle past, — he scolding while she pouts,
She canting while he calms, — in those eternal bouts
Of age, the dog — with youth, the cat — by rose-festoon
Tied teasingly enough — Columbine, Pantaloon :
She, toe-tips and *staccato*, — *legato* shakes his poll
And shambles in pursuit, the senior. *Fi la folle !*
Lie to him ! get his gold and pay its price ! begin
Your trade betimes, nor wait till you 've wed Harlequin
And need, at the week's end, to play the duteous wife,
And swear you still love slaps and leapings more than life !
Pretty ! I say.

XCIII.

And so, I somehow-nohow played
The whole o' the pretty piece; and then . . . whatever weighed
My eyes down, furled the films about my wits I suppose,
The morning-bath, — the sweet monotony of those
Three keys, flat, flat and flat, never a sharp at all, —
Or else the brain's fatigue, forced even here to fall
Into the same old track, and recognize the shift
From old to new, and back to old again, and, — swift
Or slow, no matter, — still the certainty of change,
Conviction we shall find the false, where'er we range,
In art no less than nature: or what if wrist were numb,
And over-tense the muscle, abductor of the thumb,
Taxed by those tenths' and twelfths' unconscionable stretch?
Howe'er it came to pass, I soon was far to fetch —
Gone off in company with Music!

XCIV.

Whither bound
Except for Venice? She it was, by instinct found
Carnival-country proper, who far below the perch
Where I was pinnacled, showed, opposite, Mark's Church,
And, underneath, Mark's Square, with those two lines of street,
Procuratié-sides, each leading to my feet —
Since from above I gazed, however I got there.

XCV.

And what I gazed upon was a prodigious Fair,
Concourse immense of men and women, crowned or casqued,

Turbaned or tiar'd, wreathed, plumed, hatted or
wigged, but masked —
Always masked, — only, how? No face-shape, beast
or bird,
Nay, fish and reptile even, but some one had preferred,
From out its frontispiece, feathered or scaled or curled,
To make the vizard whence himself should view the
world,
And where the world believed himself was manifest.
Yet when you came to look, mixed up among the rest
More funnily by far, were masks to imitate
Humanity's mishap: the wrinkled brow, bald pate
And rheumy eyes of Age, peak'd chin and parchment
chap,
Were signs of day-work done, and wage-time near,—
mishap
Merely; but, Age reduced to simple greed and guile,
Worn apathetic else as some smooth slab, erewhile
A clear-cut man-at-arms i' the pavement, till foot's
tread
Effaced the sculpture, left the stone you saw instead,—
Was not that terrible beyond the mere uncouth?
Well, and perhaps the next revolting you was Youth,
Stark ignorance and crude conceit, half smirk, half stare
On that frank fool-face, gay beneath its head of hair
Which covers nothing.

XCVI.

These, you are to understand,
Were the mere hard and sharp distinctions. On each
hand,
I soon became aware, flocked the infinitude
Of passions, loves and hates, man pampers till his mood
Becomes himself, the whole sole face we name him by,

Nor want denotement else, if age or youth supply
The rest of him : old, young, — classed creature : in the main
A love, a hate, a hope, a fear, each soul a-strain
Some one way through the flesh — the face, an evidence
O' the soul at work inside ; and, all the more intense,
So much the more grotesque.

XCVII.

" Why should each soul be tasked
Some one way, by one love or else one hate?" I asked.
When it occurred to me, from all these sights beneath
There rose not any sound : a crowd, yet dumb as death !

XCVIII.

Soon I knew why. (Propose a riddle, and 't is solved
Forthwith — in dream !) They spoke ; but, — since on me devolved
To see, and understand by sight, — the vulgar speech
Might be dispensed with. " He who cannot see, must reach
As best he may the truth of men by help of words
They please to speak, must fare at will of who affords
The banquet," — so I thought. " Who sees not, hears and so
Gets to believe ; myself it is that, seeing, know,
And, knowing, can dispense with voice and vanity
Of speech. What hinders then, that, drawing closer I
Put privilege to use, see and know better still
These *simulacra*, taste the profit of my skill,
Down in the midst?"

XCIX.

And plumb I pitched into the square —
A groundling like the rest. What think you happened there?
Precise the contrary of what one would expect! 1739
For, — whereas so much more monstrosities deflect
From nature and the type, as you the more approach
Their precinct, — here, I found brutality encroach
Less on the human, lie the lightlier as I looked
The nearlier on these faces that seemed but now so crook'd
And clawed away from God's prime purpose. They diverged
A little from the type, but somehow rather urged
To pity than disgust: the prominent, before,
Now dwindled into mere distinctness, nothing more.
Still, at first sight, stood forth undoubtedly the fact
Some deviation was: in no one case there lacked 1750
The certain sign and mark, — say hint, say trick of lip
Or twist of nose, — that proved a fault in workmanship,
Change in the prime design, some hesitancy here
And there, which checked the man and let the beast appear;
But that was all.

C.

All: yet enough to bid each tongue
Lie in abeyance still. They talked, themselves among,
Of themselves, to themselves; I saw the mouths at play,
The gesture that enforced, the eye that strove to say
The same thing as the voice, and seldom gained its point
— That this was so, I saw; but all seemed out of joint 1760
I' the vocal medium 'twixt the world and me. I gained

Knowledge by notice, not by giving ear, — attained
To truth by what men seemed, not said: to me one glance
Was worth whole histories of noisy utterance,
— At least, to me in dream.

CI.

And presently I found
That, just as ugliness had withered, so unwound
Itself, and perished off, repugnance to what wrong
Might linger yet i' the make of man. My will was strong
' the matter; I could pick and choose, project my weight:
(Remember how we saw the boatman trim his freight!)
Determine to observe, or manage to escape,
Or make divergency assume another shape
By shift of point of sight in me the observer: thus
Corrected, added to, subtracted from, — discuss
Each variant quality, and brute-beast touch was turned
Into mankind's safeguard! Force, guile, were arms which earned
My praise, not blame at all: for we must learn to live,
Case-hardened at all points, not bare and sensitive,
But plated for defence, nay, furnished for attack,
With spikes at the due place, that neither front nor back
May suffer in that squeeze with nature, we find — life.
Are we not here to learn the good of peace through strife,
Of love through hate, and reach knowledge by ignorance?
Why, those are helps thereto, which late we eyed askance
And nicknamed unaware! Just so, a sword we call
Superfluous, and cry out against, at festival:
Wear it in time of war, its clink and clatter grate
O' the ear to purpose then!

CII.

I found, one must abate
One's scorn of the soul's casing, distinct from the soul's self —
Which is the centre-drop : whereas the pride in pelf,
The lust to seem the thing it cannot be, the greed
For praise, and all the rest seen outside, — these indeed
Are the hard polished cold crystal environment
Of those strange orbs unearthed i' the Druid temple, meant
For divination (so the learned please to think)
Wherein you may admire one dew-drop roll and wink,
All unaffected by — quite alien to — what sealed
And saved it long ago : though how it got congealed
I shall not give a guess, nor how, by power occult,
The solid surface-shield was outcome and result
Of simple dew at work to save itself amid
The unwatery force around ; protected thus, dew slid
Safe through all opposites, impatient to absorb
Its spot of life, and last forever in the orb
We, now, from hand to hand pass with impunity.

CIII.

And the delight wherewith I watch this crowd must be
Akin to that which crowns the chemist when he winds
Thread up and up, till clue be fairly clutched, — unbinds
The composite, ties fast the simple to its mate,
And, tracing each effect back to its cause, elate,
Constructs in fancy, from the fewest primitives,
The complex and complete, all diverse life, that lives
Not only in beast, bird, fish, reptile, insect, but
The very plants and earths and ores. Just so I glut
My hunger both to be and know the thing I am,

By contrast with the thing I am not ; so, through sham
And outside, I arrive at inmost real, probe
And prove how the nude form obtained the chequered robe.

CIV.

— Experience, I am glad to master soon or late,
Here, there and everywhere i' the world, without debate !
Only, in Venice why ? What reason for Mark's Square
Rather than Timbuctoo ?

CV.

And I became aware,
Scarcely the word escaped my lips, that swift ensued
In silence and by stealth, and yet with certitude,
A formidable change of the amphitheatre
Which held the Carnival ; although the human stir
Continued just the same amid that shift of scene.

CVI.

For as on edifice of cloud i' the gray and green
Of evening, — built about some glory of the west,
To barricade the sun's departure, — manifest,
He plays, pre-eminently gold, gilds vapor, crag and crest
Which bend in rapt suspense above the act and deed
They cluster round and keep their very own, nor heed
The world at watch ; while we, breathlessly at the base
O' the castellated bulk, note momently the mace
Of night fall here, fall there, bring change with every blow,
Alike to sharpened shaft and broadened portico
I' the structure : heights and depths, beneath the leaden stress,

Crumble and melt and mix together, coalesce,
Re-form, but sadder still, subdued yet more and more
By every fresh defeat, till wearied eyes need pore
No longer on the dull impoverished decadence
Of all that pomp of pile in towering evidence
So lately : —

CVII.

Even thus nor otherwise, meseemed
That if I fixed my gaze awhile on what I dreamed
Was Venice' Square, Mark's Church, the scheme was straight unschemed,
A subtle something had its way within the heart
Of each and every house I watched, with counterpart
Of tremor through the front and outward face, until
Mutation was at end ; impassive and stock-still
Stood now the ancient house, grown — new, is scarce the phrase,
Since older, in a sense, — altered to . . . what i' the ways,
Ourselves are wont to see, coerced by city, town
Or village, anywhere i' the world, pace up or down
Europe ! In all the maze, no single tenement
I saw, but I could claim acquaintance with.

CVIII.

There went
Conviction to my soul, that what I took of late
For Venice was the world ; its Carnival — the state
Of mankind, masquerade in life-long permanence
For all time, and no one particular feast-day. Whence
'T was easy to infer what meant my late disgust
At the brute-pageant, each grotesque of greed and lust
And idle hate, and love as impotent for good —
When from my pride of place I passed the interlude

In critical review; and what, the wonder that ensued
When, from such pinnacled pre-eminence, I found
Somehow the proper goal for wisdom was the ground
And not the sky, — so, slid sagaciously betimes
Down heaven's baluster-rope, to reach the mob of mimes
And mummers; whereby came discovery there was just
Enough and not too much of hate, love, greed and lust,
Could one discerningly but hold the balance, shift
The weight from scale to scale, do justice to the drift
Of nature, and explain the glories by the shames
Mixed up in man, one stuff miscalled by different names
According to what stage i' the process turned his rough,
Even as I gazed, to smooth — only get close enough!
— What was all this except the lesson of a life?

CIX.

And — consequent upon the learning how from strife
Grew peace — from evil, good — came knowledge that, to get
Acquaintance with the way o' the world, we must nor fret
Nor fume, on altitudes of self-sufficiency,
But bid a frank farewell to what — we think — should be,
And, with as good a grace, welcome what is — we find.

CX.

Is — for the hour, observe! Since something to my mind
Suggested soon the fancy, nay, certitude that change,
Never suspending touch, continued to derange
What architecture, we, walled up within the cirque
O' the world, consider fixed as fate, not fairy-work.

For those were temples, sure, which tremblingly grew
blank
From bright, then broke afresh in triumph, — ah, but
sank
As soon, for liquid change through artery and vein
O' the very marble wound its way! And first a stain
Would startle and offend amid the glory; next,
Spot swift succeeded spot, but found me less perplexed
By portents; then as 't were a sleepiness soft stole
Over the stately fane, and shadow sucked the whole
Façade into itself, made uniformly earth
What was a piece of heaven; till, lo, a second birth.
And the veil broke away because of something new
Inside, that pushed to gain an outlet, paused in view
At last, and proved a growth of stone or brick or wood
Which, alien to the aim o' the Builder, somehow stood
The test, could satisfy, if not the early race
For whom he built, at least our present populace,
Who must not bear the blame for what, blamed, proves
mishap
Of the Artist: his work gone, another fills the gap,
Serves the prime purpose so. Undoubtedly there spreads
Building around, above, which makes men lift their heads
To look at, or look through, or look — for aught I
care —
Over: if only up, it is, not down, they stare,
"Commercing with the skies," and not the pavement
in the Square.

CXI.

But are they only temples that subdivide, collapse,
And tower again, transformed? Academies, perhaps!
Domes where dwells Learning, seats of Science, bower
and hall

Which house Philosophy — do these, too, rise and fall,
Based though foundations be on steadfast mother-earth,
With no chimeric claim to supermundane birth,
No boast that, dropped from cloud, they did not grow
from ground?
Why, these fare worst of all! these vanish and are found
Nowhere, by who tasks eye some twice within his
term
Of threescore years and ten, for tidings what each germ
Has burgeoned out into, whereof the promise stunned
His ear with such acclaim, — praise-payment to refund
The praisers, never doubt, some twice before they die
Whose days are long i' the land.

CXII.

Alack, Philosophy!
Despite the chop and change, diminished or increased,
Patched-up and plastered-o'er, Religion stands at least
I' the temple-type. But thou? Here gape I, all agog
These thirty years, to learn how tadpole turns to
frog;
And thrice at least have gazed with mild astonishment,
As, skyward up and up, some fire-new fabric sent
Its challenge to mankind that, clustered underneath
To hear the word, they straight believe, ay, in the teeth
O' the Past, clap hands and hail triumphant Truth's
outbreak —
Tadpole-frog-theory propounded past mistake!
In vain! A something ails the edifice, it bends,
It bows, it buries . . . Haste! cry "Heads below"
to friends —
But have no fear they find, when smother shall subside,
Some substitution perk with unabated pride
I' the predecessor's place!

CXIII.

No, — the one voice which failed
Never, the preachment's coign of vantage nothing ailed, —
That had the luck to lodge i' the house not made with hands !
And all it preached was this : " Truth builds upon the sands,
Though stationed on a rock : and so her work decays,
And so she builds afresh, with like result. Naught stays
But just the fact that Truth not only is, but fain
Would have men know she needs must be, by each so plain
Attempt to visibly inhabit where they dwell."
Her works are work, while she is she ; that work does well
Which lasts mankind their life-time through, and lets believe
One generation more, that, though sand run through sieve,
Yet earth now reached is rock, and what we moderns find
Erected here is Truth, who, 'stablished to her mind
I' the fulness of the days, will never change in show
More than in substance erst : men thought they knew : we know !

CXIV.

Do you, my generation ? Well, let the blocks prove mist
I' the main enclosure, — church and college, if they list,
Be something for a time, and everything anon,
And anything awhile, as fit is off or on,
Till they grow nothing, soon to re-appear no less
As something, — shape re-shaped, till out of shapelessness

Come shape again as sure ! no doubt, or round or square
Or polygon its front, some building will be there,
Do duty in that nook o' the wall o' the world where once
The Architect saw fit precisely to ensconce
College or church, and bid such bulwark guard the line
O' the barrier round about, humanity's confine.

CXV.

Leave watching change at work i' the greater scale, on these
The main supports, and turn to their interstices
Filled up by fabrics too, less costly and less rare,
Yet of importance, yet essential to the Fair
They help to circumscribe, instruct and regulate !
See, where each booth-front boasts, in letters small or great,
Its specialty, proclaims its privilege to stop
A breach, beside the best !

CXVI.

Here History keeps shop,
Tells how past deeds were done, so and not otherwise :
" Man ! hold truth evermore ! forget the early lies ! "
There sits Morality, demure behind her stall,
Dealing out life and death : " This is the thing to call
Right, and this other, wrong ; thus think, thus do, thus say,
Thus joy, thus suffer ! — not to-day as yesterday —
Yesterday's doctrine dead, this only shall endure !
Obey its voice and live ! " — enjoins the dame demure.
While Art gives flag to breeze, bids drum beat, trumpet blow,
Inviting eye and ear to yonder raree-show.

Up goes the canvas, hauled to height of pole. I think,
We know the way — long lost, late learned — to paint! A wink
Of eye, and lo, the pose! the statue on its plinth! 1989
How could we moderns miss the heart o' the labyrinth
Perversely all these years, permit the Greek seclude
His secret till to-day? And here 's another feud
Now happily composed: inspect this quartett-score!
Got long past melody, no word has Music more
To say to mortal man! But is the bard to be
Behindhand? Here 's his book, and now perhaps you see
At length what poetry can do!

CXVII.

Why, that 's stability
Itself, that change on change we sorrowfully saw
Creep o'er the prouder piles! We acquiesced in law
When the fine gold grew dim i' the temple, when the brass 2000
Which pillared that so brave abode where Knowledge was,
Bowed and resigned the trust; but, bear all this caprice,
Harlequinade where swift to birth succeeds decease
Of hue at every turn o' the tinsel-flag which flames
While Art holds booth in Fair? Such glories chased by shames
Like these, distract beyond the solemn and august
Procedure to decay, evanishment in dust,
Of those marmoreal domes, — above vicissitude,
We used to hope!

CXVIII.

"So, all is change, in fine," pursued
The preachment to a pause. When — "All is permanence!" 2010

Returned a voice. Within? without? No matter whence
The explanation came: for, understand, I ought
To simply say — "I saw," each thing I say "I thought."
Since ever as, unrolled, the strange scene-picture grew
Before me, sight flashed first, though mental comment too
Would follow in a trice, come hobblingly to halt.

CXIX.

So, what did I see next but, — much as when the vault
I' the west, — wherein we watch the vapory manifold
Transfiguration, — tired turns blaze to black, — behold,
Peak reconciled to base, dark ending feud with bright,
The multiform subsides, becomes the definite.
Contrasting life and strife, where battle they i' the blank
Severity of peace in death, for which we thank
One wind that comes to quell the concourse, drive at last
Things to a shape which suits the close of things, and cast
Palpably o'er vexed earth heaven's mantle of repose?

CXX.

Just so, in Venice' Square, that things were at the close
Was signalled to my sense; for I perceived arrest
O' the change all round about. As if some impulse pressed
Each gently into each, what was distinctness, late,
Grew vague, and, line from line no longer separate,
No matter what its style, edifice . . . shall I say,
Died into edifice? I find no simpler way
Of saying how, without or dash or shock or trace
Of violence, I found unity in the place

Of temple, tower, — nay, hall and house and hut, — one blank
Severity of peace in death ; to which they sank
Resigned enough, till . . . ah, conjecture, I beseech,
What special blank did they agree to, all and each ?
What common shape was that wherein they mutely merged
Likes and dislikes of form, so plain before ?

CXXI.

I urged
Your step this way, prolonged our path of enterprise
To where we stand at last, in order that your eyes
Might see the very thing, and save my tongue describe
The Druid monument which fronts you. Could I bribe
Nature to come in aid, illustrate what I mean,
What wants there she should lend to solemnize the scene ?

CXXII.

How does it strike you, this construction gaunt and gray —
Sole object, these piled stones, that gleam unground-away
By twilight's hungry jaw, which champs fine all beside
I' the solitary waste we grope through ? Oh, no guide
Need we to grope our way and reach the monstrous doo,
Of granite ! Take my word, the deeper you explore
That caverned passage, filled with fancies to the brim,
The less will you approve the adventure ! such a grim
Bar-sinister soon blocks abrupt your path, and ends
All with a cold dread shape, — shape whereon Learning spends
Labor, and leaves the text obscurer for the gloss.

While Ignorance reads right — recoiling from that Cross!
Whence came the mass and mass, strange quality of stone
Unquarried anywhere i' the region round? Unknown!
Just as unknown, how such enormity could be
Conveyed by land, or else transported over sea,
And laid in order, so, precisely each on each,
As you and I would build a grotto where the beach
Sheds shell — to last an hour: this building lasts from age
To age the same. But why?

CXXIII.

Ask Learning! I engage
You get a prosy wherefore, shall help you to advance
In knowledge just as much as helps you Ignorance
Surmising, in the mouth of peasant-lad or lass,
"I heard my father say he understood it was
A building, people built as soon as earth was made
Almost, because they might forget (they were afraid)
Earth did not make itself, but came of Somebody.
They labored that their work might last, and show thereby
He stays, while we and earth, and all things come and go.
Come whence? Go whither? That, when come and gone, we know
Perhaps, but not while earth and all things need our best
Attention: we must wait and die to know the rest.
Ask, if that 's true, what use in setting up the pile?
To make one fear and hope: remind us, all the while
We come and go, outside there 's Somebody that stays;
A circumstance which ought to make us mind our ways,

Because, — whatever end we answer by this life, —
Next time, best chance must be for who, with toil and strife,
Manages now to live most like what he was meant
Become : since who succeeds so far, 't is evident,
Stands foremost on the file ; who fails, has less to hope
From new promotion. That 's the rule — with even a rope
Of mushrooms, like this rope I dangle ! those that grew
Greatest and roundest, all in life they had to do,
Gain a reward, a grace they never dreamed, I think ;
Since, outside white as milk and inside black as ink,
They go to the Great House to make a dainty dish
For Don and Donna ; while this basket-load, I wish
Well off my arm, it breaks, — no starveling of the heap
But had his share of dew, his proper length of sleep
I' the sunshine : yet, of all, the outcome is — this queer
Cribbed quantity of dwarfs which burthen basket here
Till I reach home ; 'tis there that, having run their rigs,
They end their earthly race, are flung as food for pigs.
Any more use I see ? Well, you must know, there lies
Something, the Curé says, that points to mysteries
Above our grasp : a huge stone pillar, once upright,
Now laid at length, half-lost — discreetly shunning sight
I' the bush and briar, because of stories in the air —
Hints what it signified, and why was stationed there,
Once on a time. In vain the Curé tasked his lungs —
Showed, in a preachment, how, at bottom of the rungs
O' the ladder, Jacob saw, where heavenly angels stept
Up and down, lay a stone which served him, while he slept,

For pillow; when he woke, he set the same upright
As pillar, and a-top poured oil: things requisite
To instruct posterity, there mounts from floor to roof,
A staircase, earth to heaven; and also put in proof,
When we have scaled the sky, we well may let alone
What raised us from the ground, and, — paying to the stone
Proper respect, of course, — take staff and go our way,
Leaving the Pagan night for Christian break of day.
'For,' preached he, 'what they dreamed, these Pagans wide-awake
We Christians may behold. How strange, then, were mistake
Did anybody style the stone, — because of drop
Remaining there from oil which Jacob poured a-top, —
Itself the Gate of Heaven, itself the end, and not
The means thereto!' Thus preached the Curé, and no jot
The more persuaded people but that, what once a thing
Meant and had right to mean, it still must mean. So cling
Folk somehow to the prime authoritative speech,
And so distrust report, it seems as they could reach
Far better the arch-word, whereon their fate depends,
Through rude charactery, than all the grace it lends,
That lettering of your scribes! who flourish pen apace
And ornament the text, they say — we say, efface.
Hence, when the earth began its life afresh in May,
And fruit-trees bloomed, and waves would wanton, and the bay
Ruffle its wealth of weed, and stranger-birds arrive,
And beasts take each a mate · folk, too, found sensitive,

Surmised the old gray stone upright there, through such tracts
Of solitariness and silence, kept the facts
Entrusted it, could deal out doctrine, did it please : 2140
No fresh and frothy draught, but liquor on the lees,
Strong, savage and sincere : first bleedings from a vine
Whereof the product now do Curés so refine
To insipidity, that, when heart sinks, we strive
And strike from the old stone the old restorative.
'Which is?' — why, go and ask our grandames how they used
To dance around it, till the Curé disabused
Their ignorance, and bade the parish in a band
Lay flat the obtrusive thing that cumbered so the land!
And there, accordingly, in bush and briar it — 'bides
Its time to rise again!' (so somebody derides, 2151
That's pert from Paris) 'since, yon spire, you keep erect
Yonder, and pray beneath, is nothing, I suspect,
But just the symbol's self, expressed in slate for rock,
Art's smooth for Nature's rough, new chip from the old block!'
There, sir, my say is said! Thanks, and Saint Gille increase
The wealth bestowed so well!" — wherewith he pockets piece,
Doffs cap, and takes the road. I leave in Learning's clutch
More money for his book, but scarcely gain as much.

CXXIV.

To this it was, this same primeval monument, 2160
That, in my dream, I saw building with building blent

Fall : each on each they fast and founderingly went
Confusion-ward ; but thence again subsided fast,
Became the mound you see. Magnificently massed
Indeed, those mammoth-stones, piled by the Protoplast
Temple-wise in my dream ! beyond compare with fanes
Which, solid-looking late, had left no least remains
I' the bald and blank, now sole usurper of the plains
Of heaven, diversified and beautiful before.
And yet simplicity appeared to speak no more
Nor less to me than spoke the compound. At the core,
One and no other word, as in the crust of late,
Whispered, which, audible through the transition-state,
Was no loud utterance in even the ultimate
Disposure. For as some imperial chord subsists,
Steadily underlies the accidental mists
Of music springing thence, that run their mazy race
Around, and sink, absorbed, back to the triad base, –
So, out of that one word, each variant rose and fell
And left the same "All's change, but permanence as well."
— Grave note whence — list aloft ! — harmonics sound, that mean :
"Truth inside, and outside, truth also ; and between
Each, falsehood that is change, as truth is permanence.
The individual soul works through the shows of sense,
(Which, ever proving false, still promise to be true)
Up to an outer soul as individual too ;
And, through the fleeting, lives to die into the fixed,
And reach at length 'God, man, or both together mixed,'
Transparent through the flesh, by parts which prove a whole,

By hints which make the soul discernible by soul —
Let only soul look up, not down, not hate but love,
As truth successively takes shape, one grade above
Its last presentment, tempts as it were truth indeed
Revealed this time ; so tempts, till we attain to read
The signs aright, and learn, by failure, truth is forced
To manifest itself through falsehood ; whence divorced
By the excepted eye, at the rare season, for
The happy moment, truth instructs us to abhor
The false, and prize the true, obtainable thereby.
Then do we understand the value of a lie ;
Its purpose served, its truth once safe deposited,
Each lie, superfluous now, leaves, in the singer's stead,
The indubitable song ; the historic personage
Put by, leaves prominent the impulse of his age ;
Truth sets aside speech, act, time, place, indeed, but brings
Nakedly forward now the principle of things
Highest and least."

CXXV.

Wherewith change ends. What change to dread
When, disengaged at last from every veil, instead
Of type remains the truth ? once — falsehood : but anon
Theosuton e broteion eper kekramenon,
Something as true as soul is true, though veils between
Prove false and fleet away. As I mean, did he mean,
The poet whose bird-phrase sits, singing in my ear
A mystery not unlike ? What through the dark and drear
Brought comfort to the Titan ? Emerging from the lymph,
" God, man, or mixture " proved only to be a nymph :

"From whom the clink on clink of metal" (money, judged
Abundant in my purse) "struck" (bumped at, till it budged)
"The modesty, her soul's habitual resident"
(Where late the sisterhood were lively in their tent)
"As out of wingèd car" (that caravan on wheels)
"Impulsively she rushed, no slippers to her heels,"
And "Fear not, friends we flock!" soft smiled the sea-Fifine —
Primitive of the veils (if he meant what I mean)
The poet's Titan learned to lift, ere "Three-formed Fate,
Moirai Trimorphoi" stood unmasked the Ultimate.

CXXVI.

Enough o' the dream! You see how poetry turns prose.
Announcing wonder-work, I dwindle at the close
Down to mere commonplace old facts which everybody knows.
So dreaming disappoints! The fresh and strange at first,
Soon wears to trite and tame, nor warrants the outburst
Of heart with which we hail those heights, at very brink
Of heaven, whereto one least of lifts would lead, we think,
But wherefrom quick decline conducts our step, we find,
To homely earth, old facts familiar left behind.
Did not this monument, for instance, long ago
Say all it had to say, show all it had to show,
Nor promise to do duty more in dream?

CXXVII.

Awaking so,
What if we, homeward-bound, all peace and some fatigue,
Trudge, soberly complete our tramp of near a league,
Last little mile which makes the circuit just, Elvire?
We end where we began: that consequence is clear.
All peace and some fatigue, wherever we were nursed
To life, we bosom us on death, find last is first
And thenceforth final too.

CXXVIII.

"Why final? Why the more
Worth credence now than when such truth proved false before?"
Because a novel point impresses now: each lie
Redounded to the praise of man, was victory
Man's nature had both right to get, and might to gain,
And by no means implied submission to the reign
Of other quite as real a nature, that saw fit
To have its way with man, not man his way with it.
This time, acknowledgment and acquiescence quell
Their contrary in man; promotion proves as well
Defeat: and Truth, unlike the False with Truth's outside,
Neither plumes up his will nor puffs him out with pride.
I fancy, there must lurk some cogency i' the claim,
Man, such abatement made, submits to, all the same.
Soul finds no triumph, here, to register like Sense
With whom 't is ask and have,—the want, the evidence
That the thing wanted, soon or late, will be supplied.
This indeed plumes up will; this, sure, puffs out with pride,

When, reading records right, man's instincts still attest
Promotion comes to Sense because Sense likes it best;
For bodies sprouted legs, through a desire to run:
While hands, when fain to filch, got fingers one by one,
And nature, that's ourself, accommodative brings
To bear that, tired of legs which walk, we now bud wings
Since of a mind to fly. Such savor in the nose
Of Sense, would stimulate Soul sweetly, I suppose,
Soul with its proper itch of instinct, prompting clear
To recognize soul's self Soul's only master here
Alike from first to last. But, if time's pressure, light's
Or rather, dark's approach, wrest thoroughly the rights
Of rule away, and bid the soul submissive bear
Another soul than it play master everywhere
In great and small, — this time, I fancy, none disputes
There's something in the fact that such conclusion suits
Nowise the pride of man, nor yet chimes in with attributes
Conspicuous in the lord of nature. He receives
And not demands — not first likes faith and then believes.

CXXIX.

And as with the last essence so with its first faint type.
Inconstancy means raw, 't is faith alone means ripe
I' the soul which runs its round: no matter how it range
From Helen to Fifine, Elvire bids back the change
To permanence. Here, too, love ends where love began.
Such ending looks like law, because the natural man

Inclines the other way, feels lordlier free than bound.
Poor pabulum for pride when the first love is found
Last also! and, so far from realizing gain,
Each step aside just proves divergency in vain.
The wanderer brings home no profit from his quest
Beyond the sad surmise that keeping house were best
Could life begin anew. His prob em posed aright
Was — "From the given point evolve the infinite!"
Not — "Spend thyself in space, endeavoring to joint
Together, and so make infinite, point and point:
Fix into one Elvire a Fair-ful of Fifines!"
Fifine, the foam-flake, she: Elvire, the sea's self, means
Capacity at need to shower how many such!
And yet we left her calm profundity, to clutch
Foam-flutter, bell on bell, that, bursting at a touch,
Blistered us for our pains. But wise, we want no more
O' the fickle element. Enough of foam and roar!
Land-locked, we live and die henceforth: for here's
the villa-door.

CXXX.

How pallidly you pause o' the threshold! Hardly
night,
Which drapes you, ought to make real flesh and blood
so white!
Touch me, and so appear alive to all intents!
Will the saint vanish from the sinner that repents?
Suppose you are a ghost! A memory, a hope,
A fear, a conscience! Quick! Give back the hand
I grope
I' the dusk for!

CXXXI.

That is well. Our double horoscope
cast, while you concur. Discard that simile

O' the fickle element! Elvire is land not sea —
The solid land, the safe. All these word-bubbles came
O' the sea, and bite like salt. The unlucky bath 's to blame.
This hand of yours on heart of mine, no more the bay
I beat, nor bask beneath the blue! In Pornic, say,
The Mayor shall catalogue me duly domiciled,
Contributable, good-companion of the guild
And mystery of marriage. I stickle for the town,
And not this tower apart; because, though, half-way down,
Its mullions wink o'erwebbed with bloomy greenness, yet
Who mounts to staircase top may tempt the parapet,
And sudden there 's the sea! No memories to arouse,
No fancies to delude! Our honest civic house
Of the earth be earthy too! — or graced perchance with shell
Made prize of long ago, picked haply where the swell
Menaced a little once — or seaweed-branch that yet
Dampens and softens, notes a freak of wind, a fret
Of wave: though, why on earth should sea-change mend or mar
The calm contemplative householders that we are?
So shall the seasons fleet, while our two selves abide:
E'en past astonishment how sunrise and springtide
Could tempt one forth to swim; the more if time appoints
That swimming grow a task for one's rheumatic joints.
Such honest civic house, behold, I constitute
Our villa! Be but flesh and blood, and smile to boot!
Enter for good and all! then fate bolt fast the door,
Shut you and me inside, never to wander more!

CXXXII.

Only, — you do not use to apprehend attack!
No doubt, the way I march, one idle arm, thrown slack
Behind me, leaves the open hand defenceless at the back,
Should an impertinent on tiptoe steal, and stuff
— Whatever can it be? A letter sure enough,
Pushed betwixt palm and glove! That largess of a franc?
Perhaps inconsciously, — to better help the blank
O' the nest, her tambourine, and, laying egg, persuade
A family to follow, the nest-egg that I laid 2349
May have contained, — but just to foil suspicious folk, —
Between two silver whites a yellow double yolk!
Oh, threaten no farewell! five minutes shall suffice
To clear the matter up. I go, and in a trice
Return; five minutes past, expect me! If in vain —
Why, slip from flesh and blood, and play the ghost again!

EPILOGUE.

THE HOUSEHOLDER.

I.

Savage I was sitting in my house, late, lone:
Dreary, weary with the long day's work:
Head of me, heart of me, stupid as a stone:
Tongue-tied now, now blaspheming like a Turk;
When, in a moment, just a knock, call, cry,
Half a pang and all a rapture, there again were we! —
"What, and is it really you again?" quoth I:
"I again, what else did you expect?" quoth She

II.

"Never mind, hie away from this old house—
Every crumbling brick embrowned with sin and shame!
Quick, in its corners ere certain shapes arouse!
Let them — every devil of the night — lay claim,
Make and mend, or rap and rend, for me! Good-bye!
God be their guard from disturbance at their glee,
Till, crash, comes down the carcass in a heap!" quoth I:
"Nay, but there 's a decency required!" quoth She.

III.

"Ah, but if you knew how time has dragged, days, nights!
All the neighbor-talk with man and maid — such men!
All the fuss and trouble of street-sounds, window-sights:
All the worry of flapping door and echoing roof; and then,
All the fancies . . . Who were they had leave, dared try
Darker arts that almost struck despair in me?
If you knew but how I dwelt down here!" quoth I:
"And was I so better off up there?" quoth She.

IV.

"Help and get it over! *Re-united to his wife*
(How draw up the paper lets the parish-people know?)
Lies M., or N., departed from this life,
Day the this or that, month and year the so and so.
What i' the way of final flourish? Prose, verse? Try!

Affliction sore long time he bore, or, what is it to be?
Till God did please to grant him ease. Do end!" quoth I:
"I end with — Love is all and Death is naught!" quoth She.

PACCHIAROTTO

AND

HOW HE WORKED IN DISTEMPER,

ET CÆTERA.

1876.

PROLOGUE.

I.

O THE old wall here! How I could pass
  Life in a long Midsummer day,
My feet confined to a plot of grass,
  My eyes from a wall not once away!

II.

And lush and lithe do the creepers clothe
  Yon wall I watch, with a wealth of green:
Its bald red bricks draped, nothing loth,
  In lappets of tangle they laugh between.

III.

Now, what is it makes pulsate the robe?
  Why tremble the sprays? What life o'erbrims
The body, — the house, no eye can probe, —
  Divined as, beneath a robe, the limbs?

IV.

And there again ! But my heart may guess
Who tripped behind ; and she sang perhaps :
So, the old wall throbbed, and its life's excess
Died out and away in the leafy wraps.

V.

Wall upon wall are between us : life
And song should away from heart to heart.
I — prison-bird, with a ruddy strife
At breast, and a lip whence storm-notes start —

VI.

Hold on, hope hard in the subtle thing
That 's spirit : though cloistered fast, soar free ;
Account as wood, brick, stone, this ring
Of the rueful neighbors, and — forth to thee !

OF PACCHIAROTTO, AND HOW HE WORKED IN DISTEMPER.

I.

Query : was ever a quainter
Crotchet than this of the painter
Giacomo Pacchiarotto
Who took " Reform " for his motto ?

II.

He, pupil of old Fungaio,
Is always confounded (heigho !)
With Pacchia, contemporaneous
No question, but how extraneous

In the grace of soul, the power
Of hand, — undoubted dower
Of Pacchia who decked (as *we* know
My Kirkup !) San Bernardino,
Turning the small dark Oratory
To Siena's Art-laboratory,
As he made its straitness roomy
And glorified its gloomy,
With Bazzi and Beccafumi.
(Another heigho for Bazzi :
How people miscall him Razzi !)

III.

This Painter was of opinion
Our earth should be his dominion
Whose Art could correct to pattern
What Nature had slurred — the slattern !
And since, beneath the heavens,
Things lay now at sixes and sevens,
Or, as he said, *sopra-sotto* —
Thought the painter Pacchiarotto
Things wanted reforming, therefore.
" Wanted it " — ay, but wherefore ?
When earth held one so ready
As he to step forth, stand steady
In the middle of God's creation
And prove to demonstration
What the dark is, what the light is,
What the wrong is, what the right is,
What the ugly, what the beautiful,
What the restive, what the dutiful,
In Mankind profuse around him ?
Man, devil as now he found him,
Would presently soar up angel

At the summons of such evangel,
And owe — what would Man *not* owe
To the painter Pacchiarotto?
Ay, look to thy laurels, Giotto!

IV.

But Man, he perceived, was stubborn,
Grew regular brute, once cub born;
And it struck him as expedient —
Ere he tried to make obedient
The wolf, fox, bear and monkey,
By piping advice in one key —
That his pipe should play a prelude
To something heaven-tinged not hell-hued,
Something not harsh but docile,
Man-liquid, not Man-fossil —
Not fact, in short, but fancy.
By a laudable necromancy
He would conjure up ghosts — a circle
Deprived of the means to work ill
Should his music prove distasteful
And pearls to the swine go wasteful.
To be rent of swine — that *was* hard!
With fancy he ran no hazard:
Fact might knock him o'er the mazzard.

V.

So, the painter Pacchiarotto
Constructed himself a grotto
In the quarter of Stalloreggi —
As authors of note allege ye.
And on each of the whitewashed sides of it
He painted — (none far and wide so fit
As he to perform in fresco) —

He painted nor cried *quiesco*
Till he peopled its every square foot
With Man — from the Beggar barefoot
To the Noble in cap and feather:
All sorts and conditions together.
The Soldier in breastplate and helmet
Stood frowningly — hail fellow well met —
By the Priest armed with bell, book and candle.
Nor did he omit to handle
The Fair Sex, our brave distemperer:
Not merely King, Clown, Pope, Emperor —
He diversified too his Hades
Of all forms, pinched Labor and paid Ease,
With as mixed an assemblage of Ladies.

VI.

Which work done, dry, — he rested him,
Cleaned pallet, washed brush, divested him
Of the apron that suits *frescanti*,
And, bonnet on ear stuck jauntily,
This hand upon hip well planted,
That, free to wave as it wanted,
He addressed in a choice oration
His folk of each name and nation,
Taught its duty to every station.
The Pope was declared an arrant
Impostor at once, I warrant.
The Emperor — truth might tax him
With ignorance of the maxim
"Shear sheep but nowise flay them!"
And the Vulgar that obey them,
The Ruled, well-matched with the Ruling,
They failed not of wholesome schooling
On their knavery and their fooling.

As for Art — where 's decorum ? Pooh-poohed it is
By Poets that plague us with lewd ditties,
And Painters that pester with nudities !

VII.

Now, your rater and debater
Is balked by a mere spectator
Who simply stares and listens
Tongue tied, while eye nor glistens
Nor brow grows hot and twitchy,
Nor mouth, for a combat itchy,
Quivers with some convincing
Reply — that sets him wincing ?
Nay, rather — reply that furnishes
Your debater with just what burnishes
The crest of him, all one triumph,
As you see him rise, hear him cry " Humph !
Convinced am I ? This confutes me ?
Receive the rejoinder that suits me !
Confutation of vassal for prince meet —
Wherein all the powers that convince meet,
And mash my opponent to mincemeat ! "

VIII.

So, off from his head flies the bonnet,
His hip loses hand planted on it,
While t' other hand, frequent in gesture,
Slinks modestly back beneath vesture,
As, — hop, skip and jump, — he 's along with
Those weak ones he late proved so strong with !
Pope, Emperor, lo, he 's beside them,
Friendly now, who late could not abide them,
King, Clown, Soldier, Priest, Noble, Burgess ;
And his voice, that out-roared Boanerges,

How minikin-mildly it urges
In accents how gentled and gingered
Its word in defence of the injured!
"O call him not culprit, this Pontiff!
Be hard on this Kaiser ye won't if
Ye take into con-si-der-ation
What dangers attend elevation!
The Priest — who expects him to descant
On duty with more zeal and less cant?
He preaches but rubbish he 's reared in.
The Soldier, grown deaf (by the mere din
Of battle) to mercy, learned tipping
And what not of vice while a stripling.
The Lawyer — his lies are conventional.
And as for the Poor Sort — why mention all
Obstructions that leave barred and bolted
Access to the brains of each dolt-head?"

IX.

He ended, you wager? Not half! A bet?
Precedence to males in the alphabet!
Still, disposed of Man's A, B, C, there 's X,
Y, Z, want assistance, — the Fair Sex!
How much may be said in excuse of
Those vanities — males see no use of —
From silk shoe on heel to laced poll's-hood!
What 's their frailty beside our own falsehood?
The boldest, most brazen of . . . trumpets,
How kind can they be to their dumb pets!
Of their charms — how are most frank, how few venal!
While as for those charges of Juvenal —
Quæ nemo dixisset in toto
Nisi (*ædepol*) *ore illoto* —
He dismissed every charge with an "*Apage!*"

x.

Then, cocking (in Scotch phrase) his cap a-gee,
Right hand disengaged from the doublet
— Like landlord, in house he had sub-let
Resuming of guardianship gestion,
To call tenants' conduct in question —
Hop, skip, jump, to inside from outside
Of chamber, he lords, ladies, louts eyed
With such transformation of visage
As fitted the censor of this age.
No longer an advocate tepid
Of frailty, but champion intrepid
Of strength, not of falsehood but verity,
He, one after one, with asperity
Stripped bare all the cant-clothed abuses,
Disposed of sophistic excuses,
Forced folly each shift to abandon,
And left vice with no leg to stand on.
So crushing the force he exerted,
That Man at his foot lay converted!

xi.

True — Man bred of paint-pot and mortar!
But why suppose folks of this sort are
More likely to hear and be tractable
Than folks all alive and, in fact, able
To testify promptly by action
Their ardor, and make satisfaction
For misdeeds *non verbis sed factis?*
"With folk all alive be my practice
Henceforward! O mortar, paint-pot O,
Farewell to ye!" cried Pacchiarotto,
"Let only occasion intérpose!"

XII.

It did so: for, pat to the purpose
Through causes I need not examine,
There fell upon Siena a famine.
In vain did the magistrates busily
Seek succor, fetch grain out of Sicily,
Nay, throw mill and bakehouse wide open —
Such misery followed as no pen
Of mine shall depict ye. Faint, fainter
Waxed hope of relief: so, our painter,
Emboldened by triumph of recency,
How could he do other with decency
Than rush in this strait to the rescue,
Play schoolmaster, point as with fescue
To each and all slips in Man's spelling
The law of the land? — slips now telling
With monstrous effect on the city,
Whose magistrates moved him to pity
As, bound to read law to the letter,
They minded their hornbook no better.

XIII.

I ought to have told you, at starting,
How certain, who itched to be carting
Abuses away clean and thorough
From Siena, both province and borough,
Had formed themselves into a company
Whose swallow could bolt in a lump any
Obstruction of scruple, provoking
The nicer throat's coughing and choking:
Fit Club, by as fit a name dignified
Of "Freed Ones" — "*Bardotti*" — which signified
"Spare-Horses" that walk by the wagon

The team has to drudge for and drag on.
This notable club Pacchiarotto
Had joined long since, paid scot and lot to,
As free and accepted "Bardotto."
The Bailiwick watched with no quiet eye
The outrage thus done to society,
And noted the advent especially
Of Pacchiarotto their fresh ally.

XIV.

These Spare-Horses forthwith assembled:
Neighed words whereat citizens trembled
As oft as the chiefs, in the Square by
The Duomo, proposed a way whereby
The city were cured of disaster.
"Just substitute servant for master,
Make Poverty Wealth and Wealth Poverty,
Unloose Man from overt and covert tie,
And straight out of social confusion
True Order would spring!" Brave illusion —
Aims heavenly attained by means earthy!

XV.

Off to these at full speed rushed our worthy, —
Brain practised and tongue no less tutored,
In argument's armor accoutred, —
Sprang forth, mounted rostrum and essayed
Proposals like those to which "Yes" said
So glibly each personage painted
O' the wall-side wherewith you 're acquainted.
He harangued on the faults of the Bailiwick:
"Red soon were our State-candle's paly wick,
If wealth would become but interfluous,

Fill voids up with just the superfluous ;
If ignorance gave way to knowledge
— Not pedantry picked up at college
From Doctors, Professors *et cætera* —
(*They* say : '*kai ta loipa*' — like better a
Long Greek string of *kappas, taus, lambdas,*
Tacked on to the tail of each damned ass) —
No knowledge we want of this quality,
But knowledge indeed — practicality
Through insight's fine universality !
If you shout '*Bailiffs, out on ye all! Fie,*
Thou Chief of our forces, Amalfi,
Who shieldest the rogue and the clotpoll!'
If you pounce on and poke out, with what pole
I leave ye to fancy, our Siena's
Beast-litter of sloths and hyenas — "
(Whoever to scan this is ill able
Forgets the town's name 's a dissyllable)
" If, this done, ye did — as ye might — place
For once the right man in the right place,
If you listened to me . . ."

XVI.

At which last " If"
There flew at his throat like a mastiff
One Spare-Horse — another and another !
Such outbreak of tumult and pother,
Horse-faces a-laughing and fleering,
Horse-voices a-mocking and jeering,
Horse-hands raised to collar the caitiff
Whose impudence ventured the late " If" —
That, had not fear sent Pacchiarotto
Off tramping, as fast as could trot toe,
Away from the scene of discomfiture —

Had he stood there stock-still in a dumb fit — sure
Am I he had paid in his person
Till his mother might fail to know her son,
Though she gazed on him never so wistful,
In the figure so tattered and tristful.
Each mouth full of curses, each fist full
Of cuffings — behold, Pacchiarotto,
The pass which thy project has got to,
Of trusting, nigh ashes still hot — tow!
(The paraphrase — which I much need — is
From Horace "*per ignes incedis.*")

XVII.

Right and left did he dash helter-skelter
In agonized search of a shelter.
No purlieu so blocked and no alley
So blind as allowed him to rally
His spirits and see — nothing hampered
His steps if he trudged and not scampered
Up here and down there in a city
That 's all ups and downs, more the pity
For folk who would outrun the constable.
At last he stopped short at the one stable
And sure place of refuge that 's offered
Humanity. Lately was coffered
A corpse in its sepulchre, situate
By St. John's Observance. "Habituate
Thyself to the strangest of bedfellows,
And, kicked by the live, kiss the dead fellows!"
So Misery counselled the craven.
At once he crept safely to haven
Through a hole left unbricked in the structure.
Ay, Misery, in have you tucked your
Poor client and left him conterminous

With — pah ! — the thing fetid and verminous !
(I gladly would spare you the detail,
But History writes what I retail.)

XVIII.

Two days did he groan in his domicile :
" Good Saints, set me free and I promise I 'll
Abjure all ambition of preaching
Change, whether to minds touched by teaching
— The smooth folk of fancy, mere figments
Created by plaster and pigments, —
Or to minds that receive with such rudeness
Dissuasion from pride, greed and lewdness,
— The rough folk of fact, life's true specimens
Of mind — ' *haud in posse sed esse mens* '
As it was, is, and shall be forever
Despite of my utmost endeavor.
O live foes I thought to illumine,
Henceforth lie untroubled your gloom in !
I need my own light, every spark, as
I couch with this sole friend — a carcase ! "

XIX.

Two days thus he maundered and rambled ;
Then, starved back to sanity, scrambled
From out his receptacle loathsome.
" A spectre ! " — declared upon oath some
Who saw him emerge and (appalling
To mention) his garments a-crawling
With plagues far beyond the Egyptian.
He gained, in a state past description,
A convent of monks, the Observancy.

XX.

Thus far is a fact: I reserve fancy
For Fancy 's more proper employment:
And now she waves wing with enjoyment,
To tell ye how preached the Superior
When somewhat our painter's exterior
Was sweetened. He needed (no mincing
The matter) much soaking and rinsing,
Nay, rubbing with drugs odoriferous,
Till, rid of his garments pestiferous
And robed by the help of the Brotherhood
In odds and ends, — this gown and t' other hood, —
His empty inside first well-garnished, —
He delivered a tale round, unvarnished.

XXI

"Ah, Youth!" ran the Abbot's admonishment,
"Thine error scarce moves my astonishment.
For — why shall I shrink from asserting? —
Myself have had hopes of converting
The foolish to wisdom, till, sober,
My life found its May grow October.
I talked and I wrote, but, one morning,
Life's Autumn bore fruit in this warning:
'*Let tongue rest, and quiet thy quill be!*
Earth is earth and not heaven, and ne'er will be.'
Man's work is to labor and leaven —
As best he may — earth here with heaven;
'T is work for work's sake that he 's needing:
Let him work on and on as if speeding
Work's end, but not dream of succeeding!
Because if success were intended,
Why, heaven would begin ere earth ended.

A Spare-Horse? Be rather a thill-horse,
Or — what 's the plain truth — just a mill-horse!
Earth 's a mill where we grind and wear mufflers:
A whip awaits shirkers and shufflers
Who slacken their pace, sick of lugging
At what don't advance for their tugging.
Though round goes the mill, we must still post
On and on as if moving the mill-post.
So, grind away, mouth-wise and pen-wise,
Do all that we can to make men wise!
And if men prefer to be foolish,
Ourselves have proved horse-like not mulish:
Sent grist, a good sackful, to hopper,
And worked as the Master thought proper.
Tongue I wag, pen I ply, who am Abbot;
Stick thou, Son, to daub-brush and dab-pot!
But, soft! I scratch hard on the scab hot?
Though cured of thy plague, there may linger
A pimple I fray with rough finger?
So soon could my homily transmute
Thy brass into gold? Why, the man 's mute!"

XXII.

"Ay, Father, I 'm mute with admiring
How Nature's indulgence untiring
Still bids us turn deaf ear to Reason's
Best rhetoric — clutch at all seasons
And hold fast to what 's proved untenable!
Thy maxim is — Man 's not amenable
To argument: whereof by consequence —
Thine arguments reach me: a non-sequence!
Yet blush not discouraged, O Father!
I stand unconverted, the rather
That nowise I need a conversion.

No live man (I cap thy assertion)
By argument ever could take hold
Of me. 'T was the dead thing, the clay-cold,
Which grinned '*Art thou so in a hurry*
That out of warm light thou must skurry
And join me down here in the dungeon
Because, above, one's Jack and one — John,
One's swift in the race, one — a hobbler,
One's a crowned king, and one — a capped cobbler,
Rich and poor, sage and fool, virtuous, vicious?
Why complain? Art thou so unsuspicious
That all's for an hour of essaying
Who's fit and who's unfit for playing
His part in the after-construction
— Heaven's Piece whereof Earth's the Induction?
Things rarely go smooth at Rehearsal.
Wait patient the change universal,
And act, and let act, in existence!
For, as thou art clapped hence or hissed hence,
Thou hast thy promotion or otherwise.
And why must wise thou have thy brother wise
Because in rehearsal thy cue be
To shine by the side of a booby?
No polishing garnet to ruby!
All's well that ends well — through Art's magic
Some end, whether comic or tragic,
The Artist has purposed, be certain!
Explained at the fall of the curtain —
In showing thy wisdom at odds with
That folly: he tries men and gods with
No problem for weak wits to solve meant,
But one worth such Author's evolvement.
So, back nor disturb play's production
By giving thy brother instruction

To throw up his fool's-part allotted!
Lest haply thyself prove besotted
When stript, for thy pains, of that costume
Of sage, which has bred the imposthume
I prick to relieve thee of, — Vanity!'

XXIII.

"So, Father, behold me in sanity!
I'm back to the palette and mahlstick:
And as for Man — let each and all stick
To what was prescribed them at starting!
Once planted as fools — no departing
From folly one inch, *sæculorum*
In sæcula! Pass me the jorum,
And push me the platter — my stomach
Retains, through its fasting, still some ache —
And then, with your kind *Benedicite*,
Good-bye!"

XXIV.

I have told with simplicity
My tale, dropped those harsh analytics,
And tried to content you, my critics,
Who greeted my early uprising!
I knew you through all the disguising,
Droll dogs, as I jumped up, cried "Heyday!
This Monday is — what else but May-day?
And these in the drabs, blues and yellows,
Are surely the privileged fellows.
So, saltbox and bones, tongs and bellows,"
(I threw up the window) "your pleasure?

XXV.

Then he who directed the measure —
An old friend — put leg forward nimbly,

"We critics as sweeps out your chimbly!
Much soot to remove from your flue, sir!
Who spares coal in kitchen an't you, sir!
And neighbors complain it 's no joke, sir,
— You ought to consume your own smoke, sir!"

XXVI.

Ah, rogues, but my housemaid suspects you —
Is confident oft she detects you
In bringing more filth into my house
Than ever you found there! I 'm pious
However: 't was God made you dingy
And me — with no need to be stingy
Of soap, when 't is sixpence the packet.
So, dance away, boys, dust my jacket,
Bang drum and blow fife — ay, and rattle
Your brushes, for that 's half the battle!
Don't trample the grass, — hocus-pocus
With grime my Spring snowdrop and crocus, —
And, what with your rattling and tinkling,
Who knows but you give me an inkling
How music sounds, thanks to the jangle
Of regular drum and triangle?
Whereby, tap-tap, chink-chink, 't is proven
I break rule as bad as Beethoven.
"That chord now — a groan or a grunt is 't?
Schumann's self was no worse contrapuntist.
No ear! or if ear, so tough-gristled —
He thought that he sung while he whistled!"

XXVII.

So, this time I whistle, not sing at all,
My story, the largess I fling at all
And every the rough there whose *aubade*

Did its best to amuse me, — nor *so* bad!
Take my thanks, pick up largess, and scamper
Off free, ere your mirth gets a damper!
You 've Monday, your one day, your fun-day,
While mine is a year that 's all Sunday.
I 've seen you, times — who knows how many? —
Dance in here, strike up, play the zany,
Make mouths at the tenant, hoot warning
You 'll find him decamped next May-morning;
Then scuttle away, glad to 'scape hence
With — kicks? no, but laughter and ha'pence!
Mine 's freehold, by grace of the grand Lord
Who lets out the ground here, — my landlord:
To him I pay quit-rent — devotion;
Nor hence shall I budge, I 've a notion,
Nay, here shall my whistling and singing
Set all his street's echoes a-ringing
Long after the last of your number
Has ceased my front-court to encumber
While, treading down rose and ranunculus,
You *Tommy-make-room-for-your-Uncle* us!
Troop, all of you — man or homunculus,
Quick march! for Xanthippe, my housemaid,
If once on your pates she a souse made
With what, pan or pot, bowl or *skoramis*
First comes to her hand — things were more amiss!
I would not for worlds be your place in —
Recipient of slops from the basin!
You, Jack-in-the-Green, leaf-and-twiggishness
Won't save a dry thread on your priggishness!
While as for Quilp-Hop-o'-my-thumb there,
Banjo-Byron that twangs the strum-strum there —
He 'll think, as the pickle he curses,
I 've discharged on his pate his own verses!

"Dwarfs are saucy," says Dickens: so, sauced in
Your own sauce, . . .[1]

XXVIII.

But, back to my Knight of the Pencil,
Dismissed to his fresco and stencil!
Whose story — begun with a chuckle,
And throughout timed by raps of the knuckle, —
To small enough purpose were studied
If it ends with crown cracked or nose bloodied.
Come, critics, — not shake hands, excuse me!
But — say have you grudged to amuse me
This once in the forty-and-over
Long years since you trampled my clover
And scared from my house-eaves each sparrow
I never once harmed by that arrow
Of song, *karterotaton belos*,
(Which Pindar declares the true *melos*)
I was forging and filing and finishing,
And no whit my labors diminishing
Because, though high up in a chamber
Where none of your kidney may clamber
Your hullabaloo would approach me?
Was it "grammar" wherein you would "coach" me—
You, — pacing in even that paddock
Of language allotted you *ad hoc*,
With a clog at your fetlocks, — you — scorners
Of me free of all its four corners?
Was it "clearness of words which convey thought":
Ay, if words never needed enswathe aught
But ignorance, impudence, envy

[1] No, please! For

"Who would be satirical
On a thing so very small?"
— *Printer's Devil.* [Note by R. B.]

And malice — what word-swathe would then vie
With yours for a clearness crystalline?
But had you to put in one small line
Some thought big and bouncing — as noddle
Of goose, born to cackle and waddle
And bite at man's heel as goose-wont is,
Never felt plague its puny *os frontis* —
You 'd know, as you hissed, spat and sputtered,
Clear cackle is easily uttered!

XXIX.

Lo, I 've laughed out my laugh on this mirth-day!
Beside, at week's end, dawns my birth-day,
That *hebdome, hieron emar* —
(More things in a day than you deem are!)
— *Tei gar Apollona chrusaora*
Egeinato Leto. So, gray or ray
Betide me, six days hence, I 'm vexed here
By no sweep, that 's certain, till next year!
"Vexed?" — roused from what else were insipid ease!
Leave snoring a-bed to Pheidippides!
We 'll up and work! won't we, Euripides?

AT THE "MERMAID."

The figure that thou here seest . . . Tut!
Was it for gentle Shakespeare put?
B. JONSON. (*Adapted*)

I.

I — "NEXT Poet?" No, my hearties,
I nor am nor fain would be!
Choose your chiefs and pick your parties,
Not one soul revolt to me!

I, forsooth, sow song-sedition?
I, a schism in verse provoke?
I, blown up by bard's ambition,
Burst — your bubble-king? You joke.

II.

Come, be grave! The sherris mantling
Still about each mouth, mayhap,
Breeds you insight — just a scantling —
Brings me truth out — just a scrap.
Look and tell me! Written, spoken,
Here 's my life-long work: and where
— Where 's your warrant or my token
I 'm the dead king's son and heir?

III.

Here 's my work: does work discover —
What was rest from work — my life?
Did I live man's hater, lover?
Leave the world at peace, at strife?
Call earth ugliness or beauty?
See things there in large or small?
Use to pay its Lord my duty?
Use to own a lord at all?

IV.

Blank of such a record, truly
Here 's the work I hand, this scroll,
Yours to take or leave; as duly,
Mine remains the unproffered soul.
So much, no whit more, my debtors —
How should one like me lay claim
To that largess elders, betters
Sell you cheap their souls for — fame?

v.

Which of you did I enable
Once to slip inside my breast,
There to catalogue and label
What I like least, what love best,
Hope and fear, believe and doubt of,
Seek and shun, respect — deride?
Who has right to make a rout of
Rarities he found inside?

vi.

Rarities or, as he 'd rather,
Rubbish such as stocks his own:
Need and greed (O strange) the Father
Fashioned not for him alone!
Whence — the comfort set a-strutting,
Whence — the outcry "Haste, behold!
Bard's breast open wide, past shutting,
Shows what brass we took for gold!"

vii.

Friends, I doubt not he 'd display you
Brass — myself call orichalc,—
Furnish much amusement; pray you
Therefore, be content I balk
Him and you, and bar my portal!
Here's my work outside: opine
What 's inside me mean and mortal!
Take your pleasure, leave me mine!

viii.

Which is — not to buy your laurel
As last king did, nothing loth.
Tale adorned and pointed moral
Gained him praise and pity both.

Out rushed sighs and groans by dozens,
Forth by scores oaths, curses flew :
Proving you were cater-cousins,
Kith and kindred, king and you !

IX.

Whereas do I ne'er so little
(Thanks to sherris) leave ajar
Bosom's gate — no jot nor tittle
Grow we nearer than we are.
Sinning, sorrowing, despairing,
Body-ruined, spirit-wrecked, —
Should I give my woes an airing, —
Where 's one plague that claims respect?

X.

Have you found your life distasteful ?
My life did, and does, smack sweet.
Was your youth of pleasure wasteful ?
Mine I saved and hold complete.
Do your joys with age diminish ?
When mine fail me, I 'll complain.
Must in death your daylight finish ?
My sun sets to rise again.

XI.

What, like you, he proved — your Pilgrim —
This our world a wilderness,
Earth still gray and heaven still grim,
Not a hand there his might press,
Not a heart his own might throb to,
Men all rogues and women — say,
Dolls which boys' heads duck and bob to,
Grown folk drop or throw away ?

XII.

My experience being other,
How should I contribute verse
Worthy of your king and brother?
Balaam-like I bless, not curse.
I find earth not gray but rosy,
Heaven not grim but fair of hue.
Do I stoop? I pluck a posy.
Do I stand and stare? All 's blue.

XIII.

Doubtless I am pushed and shoved by
Rogues and fools enough: the more
Good luck mine, I love, am loved by
Some few honest to the core.
Scan the near high, scout the far low!
"But the low come close:" what then?
Simpletons? My match is Marlowe;
Sciolists? My mate is Ben.

XIV.

Womankind — "the cat-like nature,
False and fickle, vain and weak" —
What of this sad nomenclature
Suits my tongue, if I must speak?
Does the sex invite, repulse so,
Tempt, betray, by fits and starts?
So becalm but to convulse so,
Decking heads and breaking hearts?

XV.

Well may you blaspheme at fortune!
I "threw Venus" (Ben, expound!)
Never did I need importune
Her, of all the Olympian round.

Blessings on my benefactress!
Cursings suit — for aught I know —
Those who twitched her by the back tress,
Tugged and thought to turn her — so!

XVI.

Therefore, since no leg to stand on
Thus I'm left with, — joy or grief
Be the issue, — I abandon
Hope or care you name me Chief!
Chief and king and Lord's anointed,
I? — who never once have wished
Death before the day appointed:
Lived and liked, not poohed and pished.

XVII.

"Ah, but so I shall not enter,
Scroll in hand, the common heart —
Stopped at surface: since at centre
Song should reach *Welt-schmerz*, world-smart!"
"Enter in the heart?" Its shelly
Cuirass guard mine, fore and aft!
Such song "enters in the belly
And is cast out in the draught."

XVIII.

Back then to our sherris-brewage!
"Kingship" quotha? I shall wait —
Waive the present time: some new age . . .
But let fools anticipate!
Meanwhile greet me — "friend, good fellow,
Gentle Will," my merry men!
As for making Envy yellow
With "Next Poet" — (Manners, Ben!)

HOUSE.

I.

Shall I sonnet-sing you about myself?
Do I live in a house you would like to see?
Is it scant of gear, has it store of pelf?
"Unlock my heart with a sonnet-key?"

II.

Invite the world, as my betters have done?
"Take notice: this building remains on view.
Its suites of reception every one,
Its private apartment and bedroom too;

III.

"For a ticket, apply to the Publisher."
No: thanking the public, I must decline.
A peep through my window, if folk prefer;
But, please you, no foot over threshold of mine!

IV.

I have mixed with a crowd and heard free talk
In a foreign land where an earthquake chanced:
And a house stood gaping, naught to balk
Man's eye wherever he gazed or glanced.

V.

The whole of the frontage shaven sheer,
The inside gaped: exposed to day,
Right and wrong and common and queer,
Bare, as the palm of your hand, it lay.

VI.

The owner? Oh, he had been crushed, no doubt!
"Odd tables and chairs for a man of wealth!
What a parcel of musty old books about!
He smoked, — no wonder he lost his health!

VII.

"I doubt if he bathed before he dressed.
A brazier? — the pagan, he burned perfumes!
You see it is proved, what the neighbors guessed:
His wife and himself had separate rooms."

VIII.

Friends, the goodman of the house at least
Kept house to himself till an earthquake came:
'T is the fall of its frontage permits you feast
On the inside arrangement you praise or blame.

IX.

Outside should suffice for evidence:
And whoso desires to penetrate
Deeper, must dive by the spirit-sense —
No optics like yours, at any rate!

X.

"Hoity toity! A street to explore,
Your house the exception! '*With this same key*
Shakespeare unlocked his heart,' once more!"
Did Shakespeare? If so, the less Shakespeare he!

SHOP.

I.

So, friend, your shop was all your house !
Its front, astonishing the street,
Invited view from man and mouse
To what diversity of treat
Behind its glass — the single sheet !

II.

What gimcracks, genuine Japanese :
Gape-jaw and goggle-eye, the frog ;
Dragons, owls, monkeys, beetles, geese ;
Some crush-nosed human-hearted dog :
Queer names, too, such a catalogue !

III.

I thought " And he who owns the wealth
Which blocks the window's vastitude,
— Ah, could I peep at him by stealth
Behind his ware, pass shop, intrude
On house itself, what scenes were viewed !

IV.

" If wide and showy thus the shop,
What must the habitation prove ?
The true house with no name a-top —
The mansion, distant one remove,
Once get him off his traffic-groove !

V.

" Pictures he likes, or books perhaps ;
And as for buying most and best,
Commend me to these City chaps !
Or else he's social, takes his rest
On Sundays, with a Lord for guest.

VI.

"Some suburb-palace, parked about
And gated grandly, built last year:
The four-mile walk to keep off gout;
Or big seat sold by bankrupt peer:
But then he takes the rail, that 's clear.

VII.

"Or, stop! I wager, taste selects
Some out o' the way, some all-unknown
Retreat: the neighborhood suspects
Little that he who rambles lone
Makes Rothschild tremble on his throne!"

VIII.

Nowise! Nor Mayfair residence
Fit to receive and entertain, —
Nor Hampstead villa's kind defence
From noise and crowd, from dust and drain, —
Nor country-box was soul's domain!

IX.

Nowise! At back of all that spread
Of merchandise, woe 's me, I find
A hole i' the wall where, heels by head,
The owner couched, his ware behind,
— In cupboard suited to his mind.

X.

For why? He saw no use of life
But, while he drove a roaring trade,
To chuckle "Customers are rife!"
To chafe "So much hard cash outlaid
Yet zero in my profits made!

XI.

"This novelty costs pains, but — takes?
Cumbers my counter! Stock no more!
This article, no such great shakes,
Fizzes like wildfire? Underscore
The cheap thing — thousands to the fore!"

XII.

'T was lodging best to live most nigh
(Cramp, coffinlike as crib might be)
Receipt of Custom; ear and eye
Wanted no outworld: "Hear and see
The bustle in the shop!" quoth he.

XIII.

My fancy of a merchant-prince
Was different. Through his wares we groped
Our darkling way to — not to mince
The matter — no black den where moped
The master if we interloped!

XIV.

Shop was shop only: household-stuff?
What did he want with comforts there?
"Walls, ceiling, floor, stay blank and rough,
So goods on sale show rich and rare!
'*Sell and scud home*' be shop's affair!"

XV.

What might he deal in? Gems, suppose!
Since somehow business must be done
At cost of trouble, — see, he throws
You choice of jewels, every one,
Good, better, best, star, noon and sun!

XVI.

Which lies within your power of purse ?
This ruby that would tip aright
Solomon's sceptre ? Oh, your nurse
Wants simply coral, the delight
Of teething baby, — stuff to bite !

XVII.

Howe'er your choice fell, straight you took
Your purchase, prompt your money rang
On counter, — scarce the man forsook
His study of the "Times," just swang
Till-ward his hand that stopped the clang, —

XVIII.

Then off made buyer with a prize,
Then seller to his "Times" returned ;
And so did day wear, wear, till eyes
Brightened apace, for rest was earned :
He locked door long ere candle burned.

XIX.

And whither went he ? Ask himself,
Not me ! To change of scene, I think.
Once sold the ware and pursed the pelf,
Chaffer was scarce his meat and drink,
Nor all his music — money-chink.

XX.

Because a man has shop to mind
In time and place, since flesh must live,
Needs spirit lack all life behind,
All stray thoughts, fancies fugitive,
All loves except what trade can give ?

XXI.

I want to know a butcher paints,
A baker rhymes for his pursuit,
Candlestick-maker much acquaints
His soul with song, or, haply mute,
Blows out his brains upon the flute!

XXII.

But — shop each day and all day long!
Friend, your good angel slept, your star
Suffered eclipse, fate did you wrong!
From where these sorts of treasures are,
There should our hearts be — Christ, how far!

PISGAH-SIGHTS. I.

I.

Over the ball of it,
Peering and prying,
How I see all of it,
Life there, outlying!
Roughness and smoothness,
Shine and defilement,
Grace and uncouthness:
One reconcilement.

II.

Orbed as appointed,
Sister with brother
Joins, ne'er disjointed,
One from the other.
All 's lend-and-borrow;
Good, see, wants evil,
Joy demands sorrow,
Angel weds devil!

III.

"Which things must — *why* be?"
Vain our endeavor!
So shall things aye be
As they were ever.
"Such things should *so* be!"
Sage our desistence!
Rough-smooth let globe be,
Mixed — man's existence!

IV.

Man — wise and foolish,
Lover and scorner,
Docile and mulish —
Keep each his corner!
Honey yet gall of it!
There 's the life lying,
And I see all of it,
Only, I 'm dying!

PISGAH-SIGHTS. II.

I.

Could I but live again,
Twice my life over,
Would I once strive again?
Would not I cover
Quietly all of it —
Greed and ambition —
So, from the pall of it,
Pass to fruition?

II.

"Soft!" I'd say, "Soul mine!
Three-score and ten years,
Let the blind mole mine
Digging out deniers!
Let the dazed hawk soar,
Claim the sun's rights too!
Turf 't is thy walk 's o'er,
Foliage thy flight 's to."

III.

Only a learner,
Quick one or slow one,
Just a discerner,
I would teach no one.
I am earth's native:
No rearranging it!
I be creative,
Chopping and changing it?

IV.

March, men, my fellows!
Those who, above me,
(Distance so mellows)
Fancy you love me:
Those who, below me,
(Distance makes great so)
Free to forego me,
Fancy you hate so!

V.

Praising, reviling,
Worst head and best head
Past me defiling,
Never arrested,

Wanters, abounders,
March, in gay mixture,
Men, my surrounders!
I am the fixture.

VI.

So shall I fear thee,
Mightiness yonder!
Mock-sun — more near thee,
What is to wonder?
So shall I love thee,
Down in the dark, — lest
Glowworm I prove thee,
Star that now sparklest!

FEARS AND SCRUPLES.

I.

HERE 's my case. Of old I used to love him
This same unseen friend, before I knew:
Dream there was none like him, none above him, —
Wake to hope and trust my dream was true.

II.

Loved I not his letters full of beauty?
Not his actions famous far and wide?
Absent, he would know I vowed him duty;
Present, he would find me at his side.

III.

Pleasant fancy! for I had but letters,
Only knew of actions by hearsay:
He himself was busied with my betters;
What of that? My turn must come some day.

IV.

"Some day" proving — no day! Here's the puzzle.
Passed and passed my turn is. Why complain?
He's so busied! If I could but muzzle
People's foolish mouths that give me pain!

V.

"Letters?" (hear them!) "You a judge of writing?
Ask the experts! — How they shake the head
O'er these characters, your friend's inditing —
Call them forgery from A to Z!

VI.

"Actions? Where's your certain proof" (they bother)
"He, of all you find so great and good,
He, he only, claims this, that, the other
Action — claimed by men, a multitude?"

VII.

I can simply wish I might refute you,
Wish my friend would, — by a word, a wink, —
Bid me stop that foolish mouth, — you brute you!
He keeps absent, — why, I cannot think.

VIII.

Never mind! Though foolishness may flout me,
One thing's sure enough: 't is neither frost,
No, nor fire, shall freeze or burn from out me
Thanks for truth — though falsehood, gained — though lost.

IX.

All my days, I'll go the softlier, sadlier,
For that dream's sake! How forget the thrill
Through and through me as I thought "The gladlier
Lives my friend because I love him still!"

X.

Ah, but there 's a menace some one utters !
" What and if your friend at home play tricks ?
Peep at hide-and-seek behind the shutters ?
Mean your eyes should pierce through solid bricks ?

XI.

" What and if he, frowning, wake you, dreamy ?
Lay on you the blame that bricks — conceal ?
Say ' *At least I saw who did not see me,*
Does see now, and presently shall feel ' ? "

XII.

" Why, that makes your friend a monster ! " say you :
" Had his house no window ? At first nod,
Would you not have hailed him ? " Hush, I pray you !
What if this friend happen to be — God ?

NATURAL MAGIC.

I.

All I can say is — I saw it !
The room was as bare as your hand.
I locked in the swarth little lady, — I swear,
From the head to the foot of her — well, quite as bare !
" No Nautch shall cheat me," said I, " taking my stand
At this bolt which I draw ! " And this bolt — I withdraw it,
And there laughs the lady, not bare, but embowered
With — who knows what verdure, o'erfruited, o'erflowered ?
Impossible ! Only — I saw it !

II.

All I can sing is — I feel it! 10
This life was as blank as that room;
I let you pass in here. Precaution, indeed?
Walls, ceiling and floor, — not a chance for a weed!
Wide opens the entrance: where 's cold now, where 's gloom?
No May to sow seed here, no June to reveal it,
Behold you enshrined in these blooms of your bringing,
These fruits of your bearing — nay, birds of your winging!
A fairy-tale! Only — I feel it!

MAGICAL NATURE.

I.

Flower — I never fancied, jewel — I profess you!
Bright I see and soft I feel the outside of a flower.
Save but glow inside and — jewel, I should guess you,
Dim to sight and rough to touch: the glory is the dower.

II.

You, forsooth, a flower? Nay, my love, a jewel —
Jewel at no mercy of a moment in your prime!
Time may fray the flower-face: kind be time or cruel,
Jewel, from each facet, flash your laugh at time!

BIFURCATION.

We were two lovers; let me lie by her,
My tomb beside her tomb. On hers inscribe —
"I loved him; but my reason bade prefer
Duty to love, reject the tempter's bribe

Of rose and lily when each path diverged,
And either I must pace to life's far end
As love should lead me, or, as duty urged,
Plod the worn causeway arm-in-arm with friend.
So, truth turned falsehood: '*How I loathe a flower,*
How prize the pavement!' still caressed his ear — 10
The deafish friend's — through life's day, hour by hour,
As he laughed (coughing) '*Ay, it would appear!*'
But deep within my heart of hearts there hid
Ever the confidence, amends for all,
That heaven repairs what wrong earth's journey did,
When love from life-long exile comes at call.
Duty and love, one broad way, were the best —
Who doubts? But one or other was to choose.
I chose the darkling half, and wait the rest
In that new world where light and darkness fuse." 20

Inscribe on mine — "I loved her: love's track lay
O'er sand and pebble, as all travellers know.
Duty led through a smiling country, gay
With greensward where the rose and lily blow.
'*Our roads are diverse: farewell, love!*' said she;
'*'T is duty I abide by: homely sward*
And not the rock-rough picturesque for me!
Above, where both roads join, I wait reward.
Be you as constant to the path whereon
I leave you planted!' But man needs must move, 30
Keep moving — whither, when the star is gone
Whereby he steps secure nor strays from love?
No stone but I was tripped by, stumbling-block
But brought me to confusion. Where I fell,
There I lay flat, if moss disguised the rock,
Thence, if flint pierced, I rose and cried '*All's well!*
Duty be mine to tread in that high sphere

Where love from duty ne'er disparts, I trust,
And two halves make that whole, whereof — since here
One must suffice a man — why, this one must!' ''

Inscribe each tomb thus: then, some sage acquaint
The simple — which holds sinner, which holds saint!

NUMPHOLEPTOS.

Still you stand, still you listen, still you smile!
Still melts your moonbeam through me, white awhile,
Softening, sweetening, till sweet and soft
Increase so round this heart of mine, that oft
I could believe your moonbeam-smile has past
The pallid limit, lies, transformed at last
To sunlight and salvation — warms the soul
It sweetens, softens! Would you pass that goal,
Gain love's birth at the limit's happier verge,
And, where an iridescence lurks, but urge
The hesitating pallor on to prime
Of dawn! — true blood-streaked, sun-warmth, action-time,
By heart-pulse ripened to a ruddy glow
Of gold above my clay — I scarce should know
From gold's self, thus suffused! For gold means love
What means the sad slow silver smile above
My clay but pity, pardon? — at the best,
But acquiescence that I take my rest,
Contented to be clay, while in your heaven
The sun reserves love for the Spirit-Seven
Companioning God's throne they lamp before,
— Leaves earth a mute waste only wandered o'er
By that pale soft sweet disempassioned moon

Which smiles me slow forgiveness! Such the boon
I beg? Nay, dear, submit to this — just this
Supreme endeavor! As my lips now kiss
Your feet, my arms convulse your shrouding robe,
My eyes, acquainted with the dust, dare probe
Your eyes above for — what, if born, would blind
Mine with redundant bliss, as flash may find
The inert nerve, sting awake the palsied limb,
Bid with life's ecstasy sense overbrim
And suck back death in the resurging joy —
Love, the love whole and sole without alloy!

Vainly! The promise withers! I employ
Lips, arms, eyes, pray the prayer which finds the word,
Make the appeal which must be felt, not heard,
And none the more is changed your calm regard:
Rather, its sweet and soft grow harsh and hard —
Forbearance, then repulsion, then disdain.
Avert the rest! I rise, see! — make, again
Once more, the old departure for some track
Untried yet through a world which brings me back
Ever thus fruitlessly to find your feet,
To fix your eyes, to pray the soft and sweet
Which smile there — take from his new pilgrimage
Your outcast, once your inmate, and assuage
With love — not placid pardon now — his thirst
For a mere drop from out the ocean erst
He drank at! Well, the quest shall be renewed.
Fear nothing! Though I linger, unembued
With any drop, my lips thus close. I go!
So did I leave you, I have found you so,
And doubtlessly, if fated to return,
So shall my pleading persevere and earn
Pardon — not love — in that same smile, I learn,

And lose the meaning of, to learn once more,
Vainly !

What fairy track do I explore ?
What magic hall return to, like the gem
Centuply-angled o'er a diadem ?
You dwell there, hearted ; from your midmost home
Rays forth — through that fantastic world I roam
Ever — from centre to circumference,
Shaft upon colored shaft : this crimsons thence,
That purples out its precinct through the waste.
Surely I had your sanction when I faced,
Fared forth upon that untried yellow ray
Whence I retrack my steps ? They end to-day
Where they began — before your feet, beneath
Your eyes, your smile : the blade is shut in sheath,
Fire quenched in flint ; irradiation, late
Triumphant through the distance, finds its fate,
Merged in your blank pure soul, alike the source
And tomb of that prismatic glow : divorce
Absolute, all-conclusive ! Forth I fared,
Treading the lambent flamelet : little cared
If now its flickering took the topaz tint,
If now my dull-caked path gave sulphury hint
Of subterranean rage — no stay nor stint
To yellow, since you sanctioned that I bathe,
Burnish me, soul and body, swim and swathe
In yellow license. Here I reek suffused
With crocus, saffron, orange, as I used
With scarlet, purple, every dye o' the bow
Born of the storm-cloud. As before, you show
Scarce recognition, no approval, some
Mistrust, more wonder at a man become
Monstrous in garb, nay — flesh disguised as well,

Through his adventure. Whatsoe'er befell,
I followed, wheresoe'er it wound, that vein
You authorized should leave your whiteness, stain
Earth's sombre stretch beyond your midmost place
Of vantage, — trode that tinct whereof the trace
On garb and flesh repel you! Yes, I plead
Your own permission — your command, indeed,
That who would worthily retain the love
Must share the knowledge shrined those eyes above,
Go boldly on adventure, break through bounds
O' the quintessential whiteness that surrounds
Your feet, obtain experience of each tinge
That bickers forth to broaden out, impinge
Plainer his foot its pathway all distinct
From every other. Ah, the wonder, linked
With fear, as exploration manifests
What agency it was first tipped the crests
Of unnamed wildflower, soon protruding grew
Portentous mid the sands, as when his hue
Betrays him and the burrowing snake gleams through;
Till, last . . . but why parade more shame and pain?
Are not the proofs upon me? Here again
I pass into your presence, I receive
Your smile of pity, pardon, and I leave . . .
No, not this last of times I leave you, mute,
Submitted to my penance, so my foot
May yet again adventure, tread, from source
To issue, one more ray of rays which course
Each other, at your bidding, from the sphere
Silver and sweet, their birthplace, down that drear
Dark of the world, — you promise shall return
Your pilgrim jewelled as with drops o' the urn
The rainbow paints from, and no smatch at all
Of ghastliness at edge of some cloud-pall

Heaven cowers before, as earth awaits the fall
O' the bolt and flash of doom. Who trusts your word
Tries the adventure: and returns — absurd
As frightful — in that sulphur-steeped disguise
Mocking the priestly cloth-of-gold, sole prize
The arch-heretic was wont to bear away
Until he reached the burning. No, I say:
No fresh adventure! No more seeking love
At end of toil, and finding, calm above
My passion, the old statuesque regard,
The sad petrific smile!

O you — less hard
And hateful than mistaken and obtuse
Unreason of a she-intelligence!
You very woman with the pert pretence
To match the male achievement! Like enough!
Ay, you were easy victors, did the rough
Straightway efface itself to smooth, the gruff
Grind down and grow a whisper, — did man's truth
Subdue, for sake of chivalry and ruth,
Its rapier-edge to suit the bulrush-spear
Womanly falsehood fights with! O that ear
All fact pricks rudely, that thrice-superfine
Feminity of sense, with right divine
To waive all process, take result stain-free
From out the very muck wherein . . .

Ah me!
The true slave's querulous outbreak! All the rest
Be resignation! Forth at your behest
I fare. Who knows but this — the crimson-quest —
May deepen to a sunrise, not decay
To that cold sad sweet smile? — which I obey.

APPEARANCES.

I.

And so you found that poor room dull,
Dark, hardly to your taste, my dear?
Its features seemed unbeautiful:
But this I know — 't was there, not here,
You plighted troth to me, the word
Which — ask that poor room how it heard.

II.

And this rich room obtains your praise
Unqualified, — so bright, so fair,
So all whereat perfection stays?
Ay, but remember — here, not there,
The other word was spoken! Ask
This rich room how you dropped the mask!

ST. MARTIN'S SUMMER.

I.

No protesting, dearest!
Hardly kisses even!
Don't we both know how it ends?
How the greenest leaf turns serest,
Bluest outbreak — blankest heaven,
Lovers — friends?

II.

You would build a mansion,
I would weave a bower
— Want the heart for enterprise.

Walls admit of no expansion :
  Trellis-work may haply flower
    Twice the size.

III.

What makes glad Life's Winter?
  New buds, old blooms after.
    Sad the sighing "How suspect
Beams would ere mid-Autumn splinter,
  Rooftree scarce support a rafter,
    Walls lie wrecked?"

IV.

You are young, my princess!
  I am hardly older :
    Yet — I steal a glance behind.
Dare I tell you what convinces
  Timid me that you, if bolder,
    Bold — are blind?

V.

Where we plan our dwelling
  Glooms a graveyard surely!
    Headstone, footstone moss may drape, —
Name, date, violets hide from spelling, —
  But, though corpses rot obscurely,
    Ghosts escape.

VI.

Ghosts! O breathing Beauty,
  Give my frank word pardon!
    What if I — somehow, somewhere —
Pledged my soul to endless duty
  Many a time and oft? Be hard on
    Love — laid there?

VII.

Nay, blame grief that 's fickle,
Time that proves a traitor,
Chance, change, all that purpose warps, —
Death who spares to thrust the sickle
Laid Love low, through flowers which later
Shroud the corpse !

VIII.

And you, my winsome lady,
Whisper with like frankness !
Lies nothing buried long ago ?
Are yon — which shimmer mid the shady
Where moss and violet run to rankness —
Tombs or no ?

IX.

Who taxes you with murder ?
My hands are clean — or nearly !
Love being mortal needs must pass.
Repentance ? Nothing were absurder.
Enough : we felt Love's loss severely ;
Though now — alas !

X.

Love's corpse lies quiet therefore,
Only Love's ghost plays truant,
And warns us have in wholesome awe
Durable mansionry ; that 's wherefore
I weave but trellis-work, pursuant
— Life, to law.

XI.

The solid, not the fragile,
Tempts rain and hail and thunder.
If bower stand firm at Autumn's close,
Beyond my hope, — why, boughs were agile;
If bower fall flat, we scarce need wonder
Wreathing — rose!

XII.

So, truce to the protesting,
So, muffled be the kisses!
For, would we but avow the truth,
Sober is genuine joy. No jesting!
Ask else Penelope, Ulysses —
Old in youth!

XIII.

For why should ghosts feel angered?
Let all their interference
Be faint march-music in the air!
"Up! Join the rear of us the vanguard!
Up, lovers, dead to all appearance,
Laggard pair!"

XIV.

The while you clasp me closer,
The while I press you deeper,
As safe we chuckle, — under breath,
Yet all the slyer, the jocoser, —
"So, life can boast its day, like leap-year,
Stolen from death!"

XV.

Ah me — the sudden terror!
Hence quick — avaunt, avoid me,
You cheat, the ghostly flesh-disguised!
Nay, all the ghosts in one! Strange error!
So, 't was Death's self that clipped and coyed me,
Loved — and lied!

XVI.

Ay, dead loves are the potent!
Like any cloud they used you,
Mere semblance you, but substance they!
Build we no mansion, weave we no tent!
Mere flesh — their spirit interfused you!
Hence, I say!

XVII.

All theirs, none yours the glamour!
Theirs each low word that won me,
Soft look that found me Love's, and left
What else but you — the tears and clamor
That 's all your very own! Undone me —
Ghost-bereft!

HERVÉ RIEL.

I.

On the sea and at the Hogue, sixteen hundred ninety-two,
Did the English fight the French, — woe to France!
And, the thirty-first of May, helter-skelter through the blue,

Like a crowd of frightened porpoises a shoal of sharks pursue,
Came crowding ship on ship to Saint-Malo on the Rance,
With the English fleet in view.

II.

'T was the squadron that escaped, with the victor in full chase;
First and foremost of the drove, in his great ship, Damfreville;
Close on him fled, great and small,
Twenty-two good ships in all;
And they signalled to the place
"Help the winners of a race!
Get us guidance, give us harbor, take us quick — or, quicker still,
Here 's the English can and will!"

III.

Then the pilots of the place put out brisk and leapt on board;
"Why, what hope or chance have ships like these to pass?" laughed they:
"Rocks to starboard, rocks to port, all the passage scarred and scored, —
Shall the 'Formidable' here, with her twelve and eighty guns,
Think to make the river-mouth by the single narrow way,
Trust to enter — where 't is ticklish for a craft of twenty tons,
And with flow at full beside?
Now, 't is slackest ebb of tide.

Reach the mooring? Rather say,
While rock stands or water runs,
Not a ship will leave the bay!"

IV.

Then was called a council straight.
Brief and bitter the debate:
"Here's the English at our heels; would you have them take in tow
All that's left us of the fleet, linked together stern and bow,
For a prize to Plymouth Sound?
Better run the ships aground!"
(Ended Damfreville his speech).
"Not a minute more to wait!
Let the Captains all and each
Shove ashore, then blow up, burn the vessels on the beach!
France must undergo her fate.

V.

"Give the word!" But no such word
Was ever spoke or heard;
For up stood, for out stepped, for in struck amid all these
— A Captain? A Lieutenant? A Mate — first, second, third?
No such man of mark, and meet
With his betters to compete!
But a simple Breton sailor pressed by Tourville for the fleet,
A poor coasting-pilot he, Hervé Riel the Croisickese.

VI.

And "What mockery or malice have we here?" cries
Hervé Riel:
"Are you mad, you Malouins? Are you cowards,
fools, or rogues?
Talk to me of rocks and shoals, me who took the sound-
ings, tell
On my fingers every bank, every shallow, every
swell
'Twixt the offing here and Grève where the river
disembogues?
Are you bought by English gold? Is it love the lying's
for?
Morn and eve, night and day,
Have I piloted your bay,
Entered free and anchored fast at the foot of
Solidor.
Burn the fleet and ruin France? That were worse
than fifty Hogues!
Sirs, they know I speak the truth! Sirs, believe
me there's a way!
Only let me lead the line,
Have the biggest ship to steer,
Get this 'Formidable' clear,
Make the others follow mine,
And I lead them, most and least, by a passage I know
well,
Right to Solidor past Grève,
And there lay them safe and sound;
And if one ship misbehave, —
— Keel so much as grate the ground,
Why, I've nothing but my life, — here's my head!"
cries Hervé Riel.

VII.

Not a minute more to wait.
" Steer us in, then, small and great!
Take the helm, lead the line, save the squadron!"
cried its chief.
Captains, give the sailor place!
He is Admiral, in brief.
Still the north-wind, by God's grace!
See the noble fellow's face
As the big ship, with a bound,
Clears the entry like a hound,
Keeps the passage, as its inch of way were the wide
sea's profound!
See, safe thro' shoal and rock,
How they follow in a flock,
Not a ship that misbehaves, not a keel that grates the
ground,
Not a spar that comes to grief!
The peril, see, is past.
All are harbored to the last,
And just as Hervé Riel hollas " Anchor!"— sure as fate,
Up the English come, — too late!

VIII.

So, the storm subsides to calm:
They see the green trees wave
On the heights o'erlooking Grève.
Hearts that bled are stanched with balm.
" Just our rapture to enhance,
Let the English rake the bay,
Gnash their teeth and glare askance
As they cannonade away!
'Neath rampired Solidor pleasant riding on the Rance!"

How hope succeeds despair on each Captain's countenance!
Out burst all with one accord,
"This is Paradise for Hell!
Let France, let France's King
Thank the man that did the thing!"
What a shout, and all one word,
"Hervé Riel!"
As he stepped in front once more,
Not a symptom of surprise
In the frank blue Breton eyes,
Just the same man as before.

IX.

Then said Damfreville, "My friend,
I must speak out at the end,
Though I find the speaking hard.
Praise is deeper than the lips:
You have saved the King his ships,
You must name your own reward.
'Faith, our sun was near eclipse!
Demand whate'er you will,
France remains your debtor still.
Ask to heart's content and have! or my name's not Damfreville."

X.

Then a beam of fun outbroke
On the bearded mouth that spoke,
As the honest heart laughed through
Those frank eyes of Breton blue:
"Since I needs must say my say,
Since on board the duty's done,

And from Malo Roads to Croisic Point, what is it
but a run? —
Since 't is ask and have, I may —
Since the others go ashore —
Come! A good whole holiday!
Leave to go and see my wife, whom I call the Belle
Aurore!"
That he asked and that he got, — nothing more.

XI.

Name and deed alike are lost:
Not a pillar nor a post
In his Croisic keeps alive the feat as it befell;
Not a head in white and black
On a single fishing-smack,
In memory of the man but for whom had gone to wrack
All that France saved from the fight whence England
bore the bell.
Go to Paris: rank on rank
Search the heroes flung pell-mell
On the Louvre, face and flank!
You shall look long enough ere you come to Hervé
Riel.
So, for better and for worse,
Hervé Riel, accept my verse!
In my verse, Hervé Riel, do thou once more
Save the squadron, honor France, love thy wife the Belle
Aurore!

A FORGIVENESS.

I AM indeed the personage you know.
As for my wife, — what happened long ago, —
You have a right to question me, as I
Am bound to answer.

(" Son, a fit reply ! "
The monk half spoke, half ground through his clenched teeth,
At the confession-grate I knelt beneath.)

Thus then all happened, Father ! Power and place
I had as still I have. I ran life's race,
With the whole world to see, as only strains
His strength some athlete whose prodigious gains
Of good appall him : happy to excess, —
Work freely done should balance happiness
Fully enjoyed ; and, since beneath my roof
Housed she who made home heaven, in heaven's behoof
I went forth every day, and all day long
Worked for the world. Look, how the laborer's song
Cheers him ! Thus sang my soul, at each sharp throe
Of laboring flesh and blood — " She loves me so ! "

One day, perhaps such song so knit the nerve
That work grew play and vanished. " I deserve
Haply my heaven an hour before the time ! "
I laughed, as silverly the clockhouse-chime
Surprised me passing through the postern-gate
— Not the main entry where the menials wait
And wonder why the world's affairs allow

The master sudden leisure. That was how
I took the private garden-way for once.

Forth from the alcove, I saw start, ensconce
Himself behind the porphyry vase, a man.
My fancies in the natural order ran:
"A spy, — perhaps a foe in ambuscade, —
A thief, — more like, a sweetheart of some maid
Who pitched on the alcove for tryst perhaps."

"Stand there!" I bid.

Whereat my man but wraps
His face the closelier with uplifted arm
Whereon the cloak lies, strikes in blind alarm
This and that pedestal as, — stretch and stoop, —
Now in, now out of sight, he thrids the group
Of statues, marble god and goddess ranged
Each side the pathway, till the gate's exchanged
For safety: one step thence, the street, you know!

Thus far I followed with my gaze. Then, slow,
Near on admiringly, I breathed again,
And — back to that last fancy of the train —
"A danger risked for hope of just a word
With — which of all my nest may be the bird
This poacher covets for her plumage, pray?
Carmen? Juana? Carmen seems too gay
For such adventure, while Juana's grave
— Would scorn the folly. I applaud the knave!
He had the eye, could single from my brood
His proper fledgeling!"

As I turned, there stood
In face of me, my wife stone-still stone-white.
Whether one bound had brought her, — at first sight

Of what she judged the encounter, sure to be
Next moment, of the venturous man and me, —
Brought her to clutch and keep me from my prey:
Whether impelled because her death no day
Could come so absolutely opportune
As now at joy's height, like a year in June
Stayed at the fall of its first ripened rose:
Or whether hungry for my hate — who knows? —
Eager to end an irksome lie, and taste
Our tingling true relation, hate embraced
By hate one naked moment: — anyhow
There stone-still stone-white stood my wife, but now
The woman who made heaven within my house.
Ay, she who faced me was my very spouse
As well as love — you are to recollect!

"Stay!" she said. "Keep at least one soul unspecked
With crime, that 's spotless hitherto — your own!
Kill me who court the blessing, who alone
Was, am, and shall be guilty, first to last!
The man lay helpless in the toils I cast
About him, helpless as the statue there
Against that strangling bell-flower's bondage: tear
Away and tread to dust the parasite,
But do the passive marble no despite!
I love him as I hate you. Kill me! Strike
At one blow both infinitudes alike
Out of existence — hate and love! Whence love?
That 's safe inside my heart, nor will remove
For any searching of your steel, I think.
Whence hate? The secret lay on lip, at brink
Of speech, in one fierce tremble to escape,
At every form wherein your love took shape

At each new provocation of your kiss.
Kill me ! "

We went in.

Next day after this,
I felt as if the speech might come. I spoke —
Easily, after all.

" The lifted cloak
Was screen sufficient : I concern myself
Hardly with laying hands on who for pelf —
Whate'er the ignoble kind — may prowl and brave
Cuffing and kicking proper to a knave
Detected by my household's vigilance.
Enough of such ! As for my love-romance —
I, like our good Hidalgo, rub my eyes
And wake and wonder how the film could rise
Which changed for me a barber's basin straight
Into — Mambrino's helm ? I hesitate
Nowise to say — God's sacramental cup !
Why should I blame the brass which, burnished up,
Will blaze, to all but me, as good as gold ?
To me — a warning I was overbold
In judging metals. The Hidalgo waked
Only to die, if I remember, — staked
His life upon the basin's worth, and lost :
While I confess torpidity at most
In here and there a limb ; but, lame and halt,
Still should I work on, still repair my fault
Ere I took rest in death, — no fear at all !
Now, work — no word before the curtain fall ! "

The " curtain " ? That of death on life, I meant :
My " word," permissible in death's event,
Would be — truth, soul to soul ; for, otherwise,

Day by day, three years long, there had to rise
And, night by night, to fall upon our stage —
Ours, doomed to public play by heritage —
Another curtain, when the world, perforce
Our critical assembly, in due course
Came and went, witnessing, gave praise or blame
To art-mimetic. It had spoiled the game
If, suffered to set foot behind our scene,
The world had witnessed how stage-king and queen,
Gallant and lady, but a minute since
Enarming each the other, would evince
No sign of recognition as they took
His way and her way to whatever nook
Waited them in the darkness either side
Of that bright stage where lately groom and bride
Had fired the audience to a frenzy-fit
Of sympathetic rapture — every whit
Earned as the curtain fell on her and me,
— Actors. Three whole years, nothing was to see
But calm and concord ; where a speech was due
There came the speech : when smiles were wanted too
Smiles were as ready. In a place like mine,
Where foreign and domestic cares combine,
There 's audience every day and all day long ;
But finally the last of the whole throng
Who linger lets one see his back. For her —
Why, liberty and liking : I aver,
Liking and liberty ! For me — I breathed,
Let my face rest from every wrinkle wreathed
Smile-like about the mouth, unlearned my task
Of personation till next day bade mask,
And quietly betook me from that world
To the real world, not pageant ; there unfurled
In work, its wings, my soul, the fretted power.

Three years I worked, each minute of each hour
Not claimed by acting : — work I may dispense
With talk about, since work in evidence,
Perhaps in history ; who knows or cares ?

After three years, this way, all unawares,
Our acting ended. She and I, at close
Of a loud night-feast, led, between two rows
Of bending male and female loyalty,
Our lord the king down staircase, while, held high
At arm's length did the twisted tapers' flare
Herald his passage from our palace, where
Such visiting left glory evermore.
Again the ascent in public, till at door
As we two stood by the saloon — now blank
And disencumbered of its guests — there sank
A whisper in my ear, so low and yet
So unmistakable !

" I half forget
The chamber you repair to, and I want
Occasion for one short word — if you grant
That grace — within a certain room you called
Our ' Study,' for you wrote there while I scrawled
Some paper full of faces for my sport.
That room I can remember. Just one short
Word with you there, for the remembrance' sake ! "

" Follow me thither ! " I replied.

We break
The gloom a little, as with guiding lamp
I lead the way, leave warmth and cheer, by damp
Blind disused serpentining ways afar
From where the habitable chambers are, —

Ascend, descend stairs tunnelled through the stone, —
Always in silence, — till I reach the lone
Chamber sepulchred for my very own
Out of the palace-quarry. When a boy,
Here was my fortress, stronghold from annoy,
Proof-positive of ownership; in youth
I garnered up my gleanings here — uncouth
But precious relics of vain hopes, vain fears;
Finally, this became in after years
My closet of entrenchment to withstand
Invasion of the foe on every hand —
The multifarious herd in bower and hall,
State-room, — rooms whatsoe'er the style, which call
On masters to be mindful that, before
Men, they must look like men and something more.
Here, — when our lord the king's bestowment ceased
To deck me on the day that, golden-fleeced,
I touched ambition's height, — 't was here, released
From glory (always symbolled by a chain!)
No sooner was I privileged to gain
My secret domicile than glad I flung
That last toy on the table — gazed where hung
On hook my father's gift, the arquebus —
And asked myself "Shall I envisage thus
The new prize and the old prize, when I reach
Another year's experience? — own that each
Equalled advantage — sportsman's — statesman's tool?
That brought me down an eagle, this — a fool!"

Into which room on entry, I set down
The lamp, and turning saw whose rustled gown
Had told me my wife followed, pace for pace.
Each of us looked the other in the face.
She spoke. "Since I could die now . . ."

(To explain
Why that first struck me, know — not once again
Since the adventure at the porphyry's edge
Three years before, which sundered like a wedge
Her soul from mine, — though daily, smile to smile,
We stood before the public, — all the while
Not once had I distinguished, in that face
I paid observance to, the faintest trace
Of feature more than requisite for eyes
To do their duty by and recognize:
So did I force mine to obey my will
And pry no further. There exists such skill, —
Those know who need it. What physician shrinks
From needful contact with a corpse? He drinks
No plague so long as thirst for knowledge — not
An idler impulse — prompts inquiry. What,
And will you disbelieve in power to bid
Our spirit back to bounds, as though we chid
A child from scrutiny that's just and right
In manhood? Sense, not soul, accomplished sight,
Reported daily she it was — not how
Nor why a change had come to cheek and brow.)

"Since I could die now of the truth concealed,
Yet dare not, must not die — so seems revealed
The Virgin's mind to me — for death means peace,
Wherein no lawful part have I, whose lease
Of life and punishment the truth avowed
May haply lengthen, — let me push the shroud
Away, that steals to muffle ere is just
My penance-fire in snow! I dare — I must
Live, by avowal of the truth — this truth —
I loved you! Thanks for the fresh serpent's tooth
That, by a prompt new pang more exquisite

Than all preceding torture, proves me right!
I loved you yet I lost you! May I go
Burn to the ashes, now my shame you know?"

I think there never was such — how express? —
Horror coquetting with voluptuousness,
As in those arms of Eastern workmanship —
Yataghan, kandjar, things that rend and rip,
Gash rough, slash smooth, help hate so many ways,
Yet ever keep a beauty that betrays
Love still at work with the artificer
Throughout his quaint devising. Why prefer,
Except for love's sake, that a blade should writhe
And bicker like a flame? — now play the scythe
As if some broad neck tempted, — now contract
And needle off into a fineness lacked
For just that puncture which the heart demands?
Then, such adornment! Wherefore need our hands
Enclose not ivory alone, nor gold
Roughened for use, but jewels? Nay, behold!
Fancy my favorite — which I seem to grasp
While I describe the luxury. No asp
Is diapered more delicate round throat
Than this below the handle! These denote
— These mazy lines meandering, to end
Only in flesh they open — what intend
They else but water-purlings — pale contrast
With the life-crimson where they blend at last?
And mark the handle's dim pellucid green,
Carved, the hard jadestone, as you pinch a bean,
Into a sort of parrot-bird! He pecks
A grape-bunch; his two eyes are ruby-specks
Pure from the mine: seen this way, — glassy blank,
But turn them, — lo the inmost fire, that shrank

From sparkling, sends a red dart right to aim!
Why did I choose such toys? Perhaps the game
Of peaceful men is warlike, just as men
War-wearied get amusement from that pen
And paper we grow sick of — statesfolk tired
Of merely (when such measures are required)
Dealing out doom to people by three words,
A signature and seal: we play with swords
Suggestive of quick process. That is how
I came to like the toys described you now,
Store of which glittered on the walls and strewed
The table, even, while my wife pursued
Her purpose to its ending. "Now you know
This shame, my three years' torture, let me go,
Burn to the very ashes! You — I lost,
Yet you — I loved!"

The thing I pity most
In men is — action prompted by surprise
Of anger: men? nay, bulls — whose onset lies
At instance of the firework and the goad!
Once the foe prostrate, — trampling once bestowed, —
Prompt follows placability, regret,
Atonement. Trust me, blood-warmth never yet
Betokened strong will! As no leap of pulse
Pricked me, that first time, so did none convulse
My veins at this occasion for resolve.
Had that devolved which did not then devolve
Upon me, I had done — what now to do
Was quietly apparent.

"Tell me who
The man was, crouching by the porphyry vase!"

"No, never! All was folly in his case,
All guilt in mine. I tempted, he complied."

"And yet you loved me?"

"Loved you. Double-dyed
In folly and in guilt, I thought you gave
Your heart and soul away from me to slave
At statecraft. Since my right in you seemed lost,
I stung myself to teach you, to your cost,
What you rejected could be prized beyond
Life, heaven, by the first fool I threw a fond
Look on, a fatal word to."

"And you still
Love me? Do I conjecture well or ill?"

"Conjecture — well or ill! I had three years
To spend in learning you."

"We both are peers
In knowledge, therefore: since three years are spent
Ere thus much of yourself *I* learn — who went
Back to the house, that day, and brought my mind
To bear upon your action, uncombined
Motive from motive, till the dross, deprived
Of every purer particle, survived
At last in native simple hideousness,
Utter contemptibility, nor less
Nor more. Contemptibility — exempt
How could I, from its proper due — contempt?
I have too much despised you to divert
My life from its set course by help or hurt
Of your all-despicable life — perturb
The calm, I work in, by — men's mouths to curb,
Which at such news were clamorous enough —

Men's eyes to shut before my broidered stuff
With the huge hole there, my emblazoned wall
Blank where a scutcheon hung, — by, worse than all,
Each day's procession, my paraded life
Robbed and impoverished through the wanting wife
— Now that my life (which means — my work) was grown
Riches indeed ! Once, just this worth alone
Seemed work to have, that profit gained thereby
Of good and praise would — how rewardingly ! —
Fall at your feet, — a crown I hoped to cast
Before your love, my love should crown at last.
No love remaining to cast crown before,
My love stopped work now : but contempt the more
Impelled me task as ever head and hand,
Because the very fiends weave ropes of sand
Rather than taste pure hell in idleness.
Therefore I kept my memory down by stress
Of daily work I had no mind to stay
For the world's wonder at the wife away.
Oh, it was easy all of it, believe,
For I despised you ! But your words retrieve
Importantly the past. No hate assumed
The mask of love at any time ! There gloomed
A moment when love took hate's semblance, urged
By causes you declare ; but love's self purged
Away a fancied wrong I did both loves
— Yours and my own : by no hate's help, it proves,
Purgation was attempted. Then, you rise
High by how many a grade ! I did despise —
I do but hate you. Let hate's punishment
Replace contempt's ! First step to which ascent —
Write down your own words I re-utter you !
' *I loved my husband and I hated — who*

He was, I took up as my first chance, mere
Mud-ball to fling and make love foul with!' Here
Lies paper!"

"Would my blood for ink suffice!"

"It may: this minion from a land of spice,
Silk, feather — every bird of jewelled breast —
This poignard's beauty, ne'er so lightly prest
Above your heart there . . ."

"Thus?"

"It flows, I see.
Dip there the point and write!"

"Dictate to me!
Nay, I remember."

And she wrote the words.
I read them. Then — "Since love, in you, affords
License for hate, in me, to quench (I say)
Contempt — why, hate itself has passed away
In vengeance — foreign to contempt. Depart
Peacefully to that death which Eastern art
Imbued this weapon with, if tales be true!
Love will succeed to hate. I pardon you —
Dead in our chamber!"

True as truth the tale.
She died ere morning; then, I saw how pale
Her cheek was ere it wore day's paint-disguise,
And what a hollow darkened 'neath her eyes,
Now that I used my own. She sleeps, as erst
Beloved, in this your church: ay, yours!

Immersed
In thought so deeply, Father? Sad, perhaps?

For whose sake, hers or mine or his who wraps
— Still plain I seem to see ! — about his head
The idle cloak, — about his heart (instead
Of cuirass) some fond hope he may elude
My vengeance in the cloister's solitude ?
Hardly, I think ! As little helped his brow
The cloak then, Father — as your grate helps now !

CENCIAJA.

Ogni cencio vuol entrare in bucato.
— *Italian Proverb.*

May I print, Shelley, how it came to pass
That when your Beatrice seemed — by lapse
Of many a long month since her sentence fell —
Assured of pardon for the parricide, —
By intercession of stanch friends, or, say,
By certain pricks of conscience in the Pope
Conniver at Francesco Cenci's guilt, —
Suddenly all things changed and Clement grew
" Stern," as you state, " nor to be moved nor bent,
But said these three words coldly ' *She must die ;* '
Subjoining ' *Pardon ? Paolo Santa Croce*
Murdered his mother also yestereve,
And he is fled : she shall not flee at least ! ' "
— So, to the letter, sentence was fulfilled ?
Shelley, may I condense verbosity
That lies before me, into some few words
Of English, and illustrate your superb
Achievement by a rescued anecdote,
No great things, only new and true beside ?
As if some mere familiar of a house

Should venture to accost the group at gaze
Before its Titian, famed the wide world through,
And supplement such pictured masterpiece
By whisper "Searching in the archives here,
I found the reason of the Lady's fate,
And how by accident it came to pass
She wears the halo and displays the palm:
Who, haply, else had never suffered — no,
Nor graced our gallery, by consequence."
Who loved the work would like the little news:
Who lauds your poem lends an ear to me
Relating how the penalty was paid
By one Marchese dell' Oriolo, called
Onofrio Santa Croce otherwise,
For his complicity in matricide
With Paolo his own brother, — he whose crime
And flight induced "those three words — 'She must die.'"
Thus I unroll you then the manuscript.

"God's justice" — (of the multiplicity
Of such communications extant still,
Recording, each, injustice done by God
In person of his Vicar-upon-earth,
Scarce one but leads off to the self-same tune) —
"God's justice, tardy though it prove perchance,
Rests never on the track until it reach
Delinquency. In proof I cite the case
Of Paolo Santa Croce."

Many times
The youngster, — having been importunate
That Marchesine Costanza, who remained
His widowed mother, should supplant the heir
Her elder son, and substitute himself

In sole possession of her faculty, —
And meeting just as often with rebuff, —
Blinded by so exorbitant a lust
Of gold, the youngster straightway tasked his wits,
Casting about to kill the lady — thus.

He first, to cover his iniquity,
Writes to Onofrio Santa Croce, then
Authoritative lord, acquainting him
Their mother was contamination — wrought
Like hell-fire in the beauty of their House
By dissoluteness and abandonment
Of soul and body to impure delight.
Moreover, since she suffered from disease,
Those symptoms which her death made manifest
Hydroptic, he affirmed were fruits of sin
About to bring confusion and disgrace
Upon the ancient lineage and high fame
O' the family, when published. Duty bound,
He asked his brother — what a son should do ?

Which when Marchese dell' Oriolo heard
By letter, being absent at his land
Oriolo, he made answer, this, no more :
" It must behove a son, — things haply so, —
To act as honor prompts a cavalier
And son, perform his duty to all three,
Mother and brothers " — here advice broke off.

By which advice informed and fortified,
As he professed himself — since bound by birth
To hear God's voice in primogeniture —
Paolo, who kept his mother company
In her domain Subiaco, straightway dared
His whole enormity of enterprise

And, falling on her, stabbed the lady dead ;
Whose death demonstrated her innocence,
And happened, — by the way, — since Jesus Christ
Died to save man, just sixteen hundred years.
Costanza was of aspect beautiful
Exceedingly, and seemed, although in age
Sixty about, to far surpass her peers
The coëtaneous dames, in youth and grace.

Done the misdeed, its author takes to flight,
Foiling thereby the justice of the world :
Not God's however, — God, be sure, knows well
The way to clutch a culprit. Witness here !
The present sinner, when he least expects,
Snug-cornered somewhere i' the Basilicate,
Stumbles upon his death by violence.
A man of blood assaults a man of blood
And slays him somehow. This was afterward :
Enough, he promptly met with his deserts,
And, ending thus, permits we end with him,
And push forthwith to this important point —
His matricide fell out, of all the days,
Precisely when the law-procedure closed
Respecting Count Francesco Cenci's death
Chargeable on his daughter, sons and wife.
" Thus patricide was matched with matricide,"
A poet not inelegantly rhymed :
Nay, fratricide — those Princes Massimi ! —
Which so disturbed the spirit of the Pope
That all the likelihood Rome entertained
Of Beatrice's pardon vanished straight,
And she endured the piteous death.

Now see
The sequel — what effect commandment had

For strict inquiry into this last case,
When Cardinal Aldobrandini (great
His efficacy — nephew to the Pope)
Was bidden crush — ay, though his very hand
Got soil i' the act — crime spawning everywhere!
Because, when all endeavor had been used
To catch the aforesaid Paolo, all in vain —
"Make perquisition" quoth our Eminence,
"Throughout his now deserted domicile!
Ransack the palace, roof and floor, to find
If haply any scrap of writing, hid
In nook or corner, may convict — who knows? —
Brother Onofrio of intelligence
With brother Paolo, as in brotherhood
Is but too likely: crime spawns everywhere."

And, every cranny searched accordingly,
There comes to light — O lynx-eyed Cardinal! —
Onofrio's unconsidered writing-scrap,
The letter in reply to Paolo's prayer,
The word of counsel that — things proving so,
Paolo should act the proper knightly part,
And do as was incumbent on a son,
A brother — and a man of birth, be sure!

Whereat immediately the officers
Proceeded to arrest Onofrio — found
At foot-ball, child's play, unaware of harm,
Safe with his friends, the Orsini, at their seat
Monte Giordano; as he left the house
He came upon the watch in wait for him
Set by the Barigel, — was caught and caged.

News of which capture being, that same hour,
Conveyed to Rome, forthwith our Eminence

Commands Taverna, Governor and Judge,
To have the process in especial care,
Be, first to last, not only president
In person, but inquisitor as well,
Nor trust the by-work to a substitute :
Bids him not, squeamish, keep the bench, but scrub
The floor of Justice, so to speak, — go try
His best in prison with the criminal :
Promising, as reward for by-work done
Fairly on all-fours, that, success obtained
And crime avowed, or such connivency
With crime as should procure a decent death —
Himself will humbly beg — which means, procure —
The Hat and Purple from his relative
The Pope, and so repay a diligence
Which, meritorious in the Cenci-case,
Mounts plainly here to Purple and the Hat.

Whereupon did my lord the Governor
So masterfully exercise the task
Enjoined him, that he, day by day, and week
By week, and month by month, from first to last
Toiled for the prize : now, punctual at his place,
Played Judge, and now, assiduous at his post,
Inquisitor — pressed cushion and scoured plank,
Early and late. Noon's fervor and night's chill,
Naught moved whom morn would, purpling, make amends !
So that observers laughed as, many a day,
He left home, in July when day is flame,
Posted to Tordinona-prison, plunged
Into a vault where daylong night is ice,
There passed his eight hours on a stretch, content
Examining Onofrio : all the stress

Of all examination steadily
Converging into one pin-point, — he pushed
Tentative now of head and now of heart.
As when the nuthatch taps and tries the nut
This side and that side till the kernel sound, —
So did he press the sole and single point
— "What was the very meaning of the phrase
'*Do as beseems an honored cavalier*'?"

Which one persistent question-torture, — plied
Day by day, week by week, and month by month,
Morn, noon and night, — fatigued away a mind
Grown imbecile by darkness, solitude,
And one vivacious memory gnawing there
As when a corpse is coffined with a snake
— Fatigued Onofrio into what might seem
Admission that perchance his judgment groped
So blindly, feeling for an issue — aught
With semblance of an issue from the toils
Cast of a sudden round feet late so free,
He possibly might have envisaged, scarce
Recoiled from — even were the issue death
— Even her death whose life was death and worse!
Always provided that the charge of crime,
Each jot and tittle of the charge were true.
In such a sense, belike, he might advise
His brother to expurgate crime with . . . well,
With blood, if blood must follow on "*the course*
Taken as might beseem a cavalier."

Whereupon process ended, and report
Was made without a minute of delay
To Clement who, because of those two crimes
O' the Massimi and Cenci flagrant late,
Must needs impatiently desire result.

Result obtained, he bade the Governor
Summon the Congregation and despatch.
Summons made, sentence passed accordingly
— Death by beheading. When his death-decree
Was intimated to Onofrio, all
Man could do — that did he to save himself.
'T was much, the having gained for his defence
The Advocate o' the Poor, with natural help
Of many noble friendly persons fain
To disengage a man of family,
So young too, from his grim entanglement:
But Cardinal Aldobrandini ruled
There must be no diversion of the law.
Justice is justice, and the magistrate
Bears not the sword in vain. Who sins must die.

So, the Marchese had his head cut off,
With Rome to see, a concourse infinite,
In Place Saint Angelo beside the Bridge:
Where, demonstrating magnanimity
Adequate to his birth and breed, — poor boy! --
He made the people the accustomed speech,
Exhorted them to true faith, honest works,
And special good behavior as regards
A parent of no matter what the sex,
Bidding each son take warning from himself.
Truly, it was considered in the boy
Stark staring lunacy, no less, to snap
So plain a bait, be hooked and hauled ashore
By such an angler as the Cardinal!
Why make confession of his privity
To Paolo's enterprise? Mere sealing lips --
Or, better, saying "When I counselled him
'*To do as might beseem a cavalier*,'

What could I mean but '*Hide our parent's shame*
As Christian ought, by aid of Holy Church!
Bury it in a convent — ay, beneath
Enough dotation to prevent its ghost
From troubling earth!'" Mere saying thus, — 't is plain,
Not only were his life the recompense,
But he had manifestly proved himself
True Christian, and in lieu of punishment
Got praise of all men. So the populace.

Anyhow, when the Pope made promise good
(That of Aldobrandini, near and dear)
And gave Taverna, who had toiled so much,
A Cardinal's equipment, some such word
As this from mouth to ear went saucily:
"Taverna's cap is dyed in what he drew
From Santa Croce's veins!" So joked the world.

I add: Onofrio left one child behind,
A daughter named Valeria, dowered with grace
Abundantly of soul and body, doomed
To life the shorter for her father's fate.
By death of her, the Marquisate returned
To that Orsini House from whence it came:
Oriolo having passed as donative
To Santa Croce from their ancestors.

And no word more? By all means! Would you know
The authoritative answer, when folk urged
"What made Aldobrandini, hound-like stanch,
Hunt out of life a harmless simpleton?"
The answer was — "Hatred implacable,

By reason they were rivals in their love."
The Cardinal's desire was to a dame
Whose favor was Onofrio's. Pricked with pride,
The simpleton must ostentatiously
Display a ring, the Cardinal's love-gift,
Given to Onofrio as the lady's gage;
Which ring on finger, as he put forth hand
To draw a tapestry, the Cardinal
Saw and knew, gift and owner, old and young;
Whereon a fury entered him — the fire
He quenched with what could quench fire only — blood.
Nay, more: "there want not who affirm to boot,
The unwise boy, a certain festal eve,
Feigned ignorance of who the wight might be
That pressed too closely on him with a crowd.
He struck the Cardinal a blow: and then,
To put a face upon the incident,
Dared next day, smug as ever, go pay court
I' the Cardinal's antechamber. Mark and mend,
Ye youth, by this example how may greed
Vainglorious operate in worldly souls!"

So ends the chronicler, beginning with
"God's justice, tardy though it prove perchance,
Rests never till it reach delinquency."
Ay, or how otherwise had come to pass
That Victor rules, this present year, in Rome?

FILIPPO BALDINUCCI ON THE PRIVILEGE OF BURIAL.

A REMINISCENCE OF A.D. 1676.

I.

'No, boy, we must not'' — so began
My Uncle (he's with God long since)
A-petting me, the good old man!
"We must not'' — and he seemed to wince
And lost that laugh whereto had grown
His chuckle at my piece of news,
How cleverly I aimed my stone —
"I fear we must not pelt the Jews!

II.

"When I was young indeed, — ah, faith
Was young and strong in Florence too!
We Christians never dreamed of scathe
Because we cursed or kicked the crew.
But now — well, well! The olive-crops
Weighed double then, and Arno's pranks
Would always spare religious shops
Whenever he o'erflowed his banks!

III.

"I'll tell you" — and his eye regained
Its twinkle — "tell you something choice
Something may help you keep unstained
Your honest zeal to stop the voice
Of unbelief with stone-throw — spite
Of laws, which modern fools enact,
That we must suffer Jews in sight
Go wholly unmolested! Fact!

IV.

"There was, then, in my youth, and yet
Is, by our San Frediano, just
Below the Blessed Olivet,
A wayside ground wherein they thrust
Their dead, — these Jews, — the more our shame!
Except that, so they will but die,
Christians perchance incur no blame
In giving hogs a hoist to sty.

V.

"There, anyhow, Jews stow away
Their dead; and, — such their insolence, —
Slink at odd times to sing and pray
As Christians do — all make-pretence! —
Which wickedness they perpetrate
Because they think no Christians see.
They reckoned here, at any rate,
Without their host: ha, ha, he, he!

VI.

"For, what should join their plot of ground
But a good Farmer's Christian field?
The Jews had hedged their corner round
With bramble-bush to keep concealed
Their doings: for the public road
Ran betwixt this their ground and that
The Farmer's, where he ploughed and sowed,
Grew corn for barn and grapes for vat.

VII.

"So, properly to guard his store
And gall the unbelievers too,
He builds a shrine and, what is more,
Procures a painter whom I knew,

One Buti (he 's with God) to paint
A holy picture there — no less
Than Virgin Mary free from taint
Borne to the sky by angels: yes!

VIII.

"Which shrine he fixed, — who says him nay? —
A-facing with its picture-side
Not, as you 'd think, the public way,
But just where sought these hounds to hide
Their carrion from that very truth
Of Mary's triumph: not a hound
Could act his mummeries uncouth
But Mary shamed the pack all round!

IX.

"Now, if it was amusing, judge!
— To see the company arrive,
Each Jew intent to end his trudge
And take his pleasure (though alive)
With all his Jewish kith and kin
Below ground, have his venom out,
Sharpen his wits for next day's sin,
Curse Christians, and so home, no doubt!

X.

"Whereas, each phiz upturned beholds
Mary, I warrant, soaring brave!
And in a trice, beneath the folds
Of filthy garb which gowns each knave,
Down drops it — there to hide grimace,
Contortion of the mouth and nose
At finding Mary in the place
They 'd keep for Pilate, I suppose!

XI.

"At last, they will not brook — not they! —
Longer such outrage on their tribe:
So, in some hole and corner, lay
Their heads together — how to bribe
The meritorious Farmer's self
To straight undo his work, restore
Their chance to meet and muse on pelf —
Pretending sorrow, as before!

XII.

"Forthwith, a posse, if you please,
Of Rabbi This and Rabbi That
Almost go down upon their knees
To get him lay the picture flat.
The spokesman, eighty years of age,
Gray as a badger, with a goat's
Not only beard but bleat, 'gins wage
War with our Mary. Thus he dotes: —

XIII.

"'*Friends, grant a grace! How Hebrews toil*
T'through life in Florence — why relate
To those who lay the burden, spoil
Our paths of peace? We bear our fate.
But when with life the long toil ends,
Why must you — the expression craves
Pardon, but truth compels me, friends! —
Why must you plague us in our graves?

XIV.

"'*Thoughtlessly plague, I would believe!*
For how can you — the lords of ease
By nurture, birthright — e'en conceive
Our luxury to lie with trees

And turf, — the cricket and the bird
Left for our last companionship:
No harsh deed, no unkindly word,
No frowning brow nor scornful lip!

XV.

"'Death's luxury, we now rehearse
While, living, through your streets we fare
And take your hatred: nothing worse
Have we, once dead and safe, to bear!
So we refresh our souls, fulfil
Our works, our daily tasks; and thus
Gather you grain — earth's harvest — still
The wheat for you, the straw for us.

XVI.

"'" What flouting in a face, what harm,
In just a lady borne from bier
By boys' heads, wings for leg and arm?"
You question. Friends, the harm is here —
That just when our last sigh is heaved,
And we would fain thank God and you
For labor done and peace achieved,
Back comes the Past in full review!

XVII.

"'At sight of just that simple flag,
Starts the foe-feeling serpent-like
From slumber. Leave it lulled, nor drag —
Though fangless — forth, what needs must strike
When stricken sore, though stroke be vain
Against the mailed oppressor! Give
Play to our fancy that we gain
Life's rights when once we cease to live!

XVIII.

"'*Thus much to courtesy, to kind,*
To conscience! Now to Florence folk!
There's core beneath this apple-rind,
Beneath this white-of-egg there's yolk!
Beneath this prayer to courtesy,
Kind, conscience — there's a sum to pouch!
How many ducats down will buy
Our shame's removal, sirs? Avouch!

XIX.

"'*Removal, not destruction, sirs!*
Just turn your picture! Let it front
The public path! Or memory errs,
Or that same public path is wont
To witness many a chance befall
Of lust, theft, bloodshed — sins enough,
Wherein our Hebrew part is small.
Convert yourselves!' — he cut up rough.

XX.

"Look you, how soon a service paid
Religion yields the servant fruit!
A prompt reply our Farmer made
So following: '*Sirs, to grant your suit*
Involves much danger! How? Transpose
Our Lady? Stop the chastisement,
All for your good, herself bestows?
What wonder if I grudge consent?

XXI.

"'— *Yet grant it: since, what cash I take*
Is so much saved from wicked use.
We know you! And, for Mary's sake,
A hundred ducats shall induce

Concession to your prayer. One day
Suffices: Master Buti's brush
Turns Mary round the other way,
And deluges your side with slush.

XXII.

" ' *Down with the ducats therefore!*' Dump,
Dump, dump it falls, each counted piece,
Hard gold. Then out of door they stump,
These dogs, each brisk as with new lease
Of life, I warrant, — glad he 'll die
Henceforward just as he may choose,
Be buried and in clover lie!
Well said Esaias — ' *stiff-necked Jews!*'

XXIII.

" Off posts without a minute's loss
Our Farmer, once the cash in poke
And summons Buti — ere its gloss
Have time to fade from off the joke —
To chop and change his work, undo
The done side, make the side, now blank,
Recipient of our Lady — who,
Displaced thus, had these dogs to thank!

XXIV.

" Now, boy, you 're hardly to instruct
In technicalities of Art!
My nephew's childhood sure has sucked
Along with mother's-milk some part
Of painter's-practice — learned, at least,
How expeditiously is plied
A work in fresco — never ceased
When once begun — a day, each side.

XXV.

"So, Buti — (he 's with God) — begins:
First covers up the shrine all round
With hoarding; then, as like as twins,
Paints, t' other side the burial-ground,
New Mary, every point the same;
Next, sluices over, as agreed,
The old; and last — but, spoil the game
By telling you? Not I, indeed!

XXVI.

"Well, ere the week was half at end,
Out came the object of this zeal,
This fine alacrity to spend
Hard money for mere dead men's weal!
How think you? That old spokesman Jew
Was High Priest, and he had a wife
As old, and she was dying too,
And wished to end in peace her life!

XXVII.

"And he must humor dying whims,
And soothe her with the idle hope
They 'd say their prayers and sing their hymns
As if her husband were the Pope!
And she did die — believing just
This privilege was purchased! Dead
In comfort through her foolish trust!
'*Stiff-necked ones*,' well Esaias said!

XXVIII.

"So, Sabbath morning, out of gate
And on to way, what sees our arch
Good Farmer? Why, they hoist their freight —
The corpse — on shoulder, and so, march!

'*Now for it, Buti!*' In the nick
Of time 't is pully-hauly, hence
With hoarding! O'er the wayside quick
There 's Mary plain in evidence!

XXIX.

"And here 's the convoy halting: right!
O they are bent on howling psalms
And growling prayers, when opposite!
And yet they glance, for all their qualms
Approve that promptitude of his,
The Farmer's — duly at his post
To take due thanks from every phiz,
Sour smirk — nay, surly smile almost!

XXX.

"Then earthward drops each brow again;
The solemn task 's resumed; they reach
Their holy field — the unholy train:
Enter its precinct, all and each,
Wrapt somehow in their godless rites;
Till, rites at end, up-waking, lo
They lift their faces! What delights
The mourners as they turn to go?

XXXI.

"Ha, ha, he, he! On just the side
They drew their purse-strings to make quit
Of Mary, — Christ the Crucified
Fronted them now — these biters bit!
Never was such a hiss and snort,
Such screwing nose and shooting lip!
Their purchase — honey in report —
Proved gall and verjuice at first sip!

XXXII.

" Out they break, on they bustle, where,
A-top of wall, the Farmer waits
With Buti: never fun so rare!
The Farmer has the best: he rates
The rascal, as the old High Priest
Takes on himself to sermonize —
Nay, sneer *' We Jews supposed, at least,*
Theft was a crime in Christian eyes!'

XXXIII.

" ' Theft?' cries the Farmer. *' Eat your words!*
Show me what constitutes a breach
Of faith in aught was said or heard!
I promised you in plainest speech
I'd take the thing you count disgrace
And put it here — and here 't is put!
Did you suppose I'd leave the place
Blank, therefore, just your rage to glut?

XXXIV.

" ' I guess you dared not stipulate
For such a damned impertinence!
So, quick, my greybeard, out of gate
And in at Ghetto! Haste you hence!
As long as I have house and land,
To spite you irreligious chaps
Here shall the Crucifixion stand —
Unless you down with cash, perhaps!'

XXXV.

" So snickered he and Buti both.
The Jews said nothing, interchanged
A glance or two, renewed their oath
To keep ears stopped and hearts estranged

From grace, for all our Church can do ;
Then off they scuttle: sullen jog
Homewards, against our Church to brew
Fresh mischief in their synagogue.

XXXVI.

"But next day — see what happened, boy !
See why I bid you have a care
How you pelt Jews! The knaves employ
Such methods of revenge, forbear
No outrage on our faith, when free
To wreak their malice ! Here they took
So base a method — plague o' me
If I record it in my Book !

XXXVII.

"For, next day, while the Farmer sat
Laughing with Buti, in his shop,
At their successful joke, — rat-tat, —
Door opens, and they 're like to drop
Down to the floor as in there stalks
A six-feet-high herculean-built
Young he-Jew with a beard that balks
Description. '*Help ere blood be spilt!*'

XXXVIII.

— "Screamed Buti : for he recognized
Whom but the son, no less no more,
Of that High Priest his work surprised
So pleasantly the day before !
Son of the mother, then, whereof
The bier he lent a shoulder to,
And made the moans about, dared scoff
At sober Christian grief — the Jew !

XXXIX.

" ' Sirs, I salute you! Never rise!
No apprehension!' (Buti, white
And trembling like a tub of size,
Had tried to smuggle out of sight
The picture's self — the thing in oils,
You know, from which a fresco 's dashed
Which courage speeds while caution spoils)
' Stay and be praised, sir, unabashed!

XL.

" ' Praised, — ay, and paid too: for I come
To buy that very work of yours.
My poor abode, which boasts — well, some
Few specimens of Art, secures
Haply, a masterpiece indeed
If I should find my humble means
Suffice the outlay. So, proceed!
Propose — ere prudence intervenes!'

XLI.

" On Buti, cowering like a child,
These words descended from aloft,
In tone so ominously mild,
With smile terrifically soft
To that degree — could Buti dare
(Poor fellow) use his brains, think twice?
He asked, thus taken unaware,
No more than just the proper price!

XLII.

" ' *Done!*' cries the monster. ' *I disburse*
Forthwith your moderate demand.
Count on my custom — if no worse
Your future work be, understand,

Than this I carry off! No aid!
My arm, sir, lacks nor bone nor thews:
The burden's easy, and we're made,
Easy or hard, to bear — we Jews!'

XLIII.

" Crossing himself at such escape,
Buti by turns the money eyes
And, timidly, the stalwart shape
Now moving doorwards; but, more wise,
The Farmer, — who, though dumb, this while
Had watched advantage, — straight conceived
A reason for that tone and smile
So mild and soft! The Jew — believed!

XLIV.

" Mary in triumph borne to deck
A Hebrew household! Pictured where
No one was used to bend the neck
In praise or bow the knee in prayer!
Borne to that domicile by whom?
The son of the High Priest! Through what?
An insult done his mother's tomb!
Saul changed to Paul — the case came pat!

XLV.

" ' *Stay, dog Jew . . . gentle sir, that is!*
Resolve me! Can it be, she crowned, —
Mary, by miracle, — Oh bliss! —
My present to your burial ground?
Certain, a ray of light has burst
Your veil of darkness! Had you else,
Only for Mary's sake, unpursed
So much hard money? Tell — oh, tell's!'

XLVI.

"Round — like a serpent that we took
For worm and trod on — turns his bulk
About the Jew. First dreadful look
Sends Buti in a trice to skulk
Out of sight somewhere, safe — alack!
But our good Farmer faith made bold:
And firm (with Florence at his back)
He stood, while gruff the gutturals rolled —

XLVII.

"'*Ay, sir, a miracle was worked,*
By quite another power, I trow,
Than ever yet in canvas lurked,
Or you would scarcely face me now!
A certain impulse did suggest
A certain grasp with this right-hand,
Which probably had put to rest
Our quarrel, — thus your throat once spanned!

XLVIII.

"'*But I remembered me, subdued*
That impulse, and you face me still!
And soon a philosophic mood
Succeeding (hear it, if you will!)
Has altogether changed my views
Concerning Art. Blind prejudice!
Well may you Christians tax us Jews
With scrupulosity too nice!

XLIX.

"'*For, don't I see, — let's issue join! —*
Whenever I'm allowed pollute
(I — and my little bag of coin)
Some Christian palace of repute, —

Don't I see stuck up everywhere
Abundant proof that cultured taste
Has Beauty for its only care,
And upon Truth no thought to waste?

L.

" " " Jew, since it must be, take in pledge
Of payment" — *so a Cardinal*
Has sighed to me as if a wedge
Entered his heart — " this best of all
My treasures!" *Leda, Ganymede*
Or Antiope: swan, eagle, ape,
(*Or what's the beast of what's the breed*)
And Jupiter in every shape!

LI.

" " *Whereat if I presume to ask*
" But, Eminence, though Titian's whisk
Of brush have well performed its task,
How comes it these false godships frisk
In presence of — what yonder frame
Pretends to image? Surely, odd
It seems, you let confront The Name
Each beast the heathen called his god!"

LII.

" " *Benignant smiles me pity straight*
The Cardinal. " 'T is truth, we prize!
Art's the sole question in debate!
These subjects are so many lies.
We treat them with a proper scorn
When we turn lies — called gods forsooth —
To lies' fit use, now Christ is born.
Drawing and coloring are Truth.

LIII.

" " " Think you I honor lies so much
As scruple to parade the charms
Of Leda — Titian, every touch —
Because the thing within her arms
Means Jupiter who had the praise
And prayer of a benighted world ?
He would have mine too, if, in days
Of light, I kept the canvas furled !"

LIV.

" " *So ending, with some easy gibe.*
What power has logic ! I, at once,
Acknowledged error in our tribe
So squeamish that, when friends ensconce
A pretty picture in its niche
To do us honor, deck our graves,
We fret and fume and have an itch
To strangle folk — ungrateful knaves !

LV.

" " *No, sir ! Be sure that — what 's its style.*
Your picture ? — shall possess ungrudged
A place among my rank and file
Of Ledas and what not — be judged
Just as a picture ! and (because
I fear me much I scarce have bought
A Titian) Master Buti's flaws
Found there, will have the laugh flaws ought !'

LVI.

" So, with a scowl, it darkens door —
This bulk — no longer ! Buti makes
Prompt glad re-entry ; there 's a score
Of oaths, as the good Farmer wakes

From what must needs have been a trance,
Or he had struck (he swears) to ground
The bold bad mouth that dared advance
Such doctrine the reverse of sound!

LVII.

"Was magic here? Most like! For, since,
Somehow our city's faith grows still
More and more lukewarm, and our Prince
Or loses heart or wants the will
To check increase of cold. 'T is '*Live*
And let live! Languidly repress
The Dissident! In short, — contrive
Christians must bear with Jews: no less!'

LVIII.

"The end seems, any Israelite
Wants any picture, — pishes, poohs,
Purchases, hangs it full in sight
In any chamber he may choose!
In Christ's crown, one more thorn we rue!
In Mary's bosom, one more sword!
No, boy, you must not pelt a Jew!
O Lord, how long? How long, O Lord?"

EPILOGUE.

μεστοὶ . . .
οἱ δ' ἀμφορῆς οἴνου μέλανος ἀνθοσμίου.

I.

"THE poets pour us wine —"
Said the dearest poet I ever knew,
Dearest and greatest and best to me.
You clamor athirst for poetry —

We pour. "But when shall a vintage be" —
You cry — "strong grape, squeezed gold from screw,
Yet sweet juice, flavored flowery-fine?
That were indeed the wine!"

II.

One pours your cup — stark strength,
Meat for a man; and you eye the pulp
Strained, turbid still, from the viscous blood
Of the snaky bough: and you grumble "Good!
For it swells resolve, breeds hardihood;
Despatch it, then, in a single gulp!"
So, down, with a wry face, goes at length
The liquor: stuff for strength.

III.

One pours your cup — sheer sweet,
The fragrant fumes of a year condensed:
Suspicion of all that 's ripe or rathe,
From the bud on branch to the grass in swathe.
"We suck mere milk of the seasons," saith
A curl of each nostril — "dew, dispensed
Nowise for nerving man to feat:
Boys sip such honeyed sweet!"

IV.

And thus who wants wine strong,
Waves each sweet smell of the year away;
Who likes to swoon as the sweets suffuse
His brain with a mixture of beams and dews
Turned syrupy drink — rough strength eschews:
"What though in our veins your wine-stock stay?
The lack of the bloom does our palate wrong.
Give us wine sweet, not strong!"

v.

Yet wine is — some affirm —
Prime wine is found in the world somewhere,
Of potable strength with sweet to match.
You double your heart its dose, yet catch —
As the draught descends — a violet-smatch,
Softness — however it came there,
Through drops expressed by the fire and worm:
Strong sweet wine — some affirm.

vi.

Body and bouquet both?
'T is easy to ticket a bottle so;
But what was the case in the cask, my friends?
Cask? Nay, the vat — where the maker mends
His strong with his sweet (you suppose) and blends
His rough with his smooth, till none can know
How it comes you may tipple, nothing loth,
Body and bouquet both.

vii.

"You" being just — the world.
No poets — who turn, themselves, the winch
Of the press; no critics — I 'll even say,
(Being flustered and easy of faith to-day)
Who for love of the work have learned the way
Till themselves produce home-made, at a pinch:
No! You are the world, and wine ne'er purled
Except to please the world!

viii.

"For, oh the common heart!
And, ah the irremissible sin
Of poets who please themselves, not us!
Strong wine yet sweet wine pouring thus,

How please still — Pindar and Æschylus! —
Drink — dipt into by the bearded chin
Alike and the bloomy lip — no part
Denied the common heart!

IX.

"And might we get such grace,
And did you moderns but stock our vault
With the true half-brandy half-attar-gul,
How would seniors indulge at a hearty pull
While juniors tossed off their thimbleful!
Our Shakespeare and Milton escaped your fault,
So, they reign supreme o'er the weaker race
That wants the ancient grace!"

X.

If I paid myself with words
(As the French say well) I were dupe indeed!
I were found in belief that you quaffed and bowsed
At your Shakespeare the whole day long, caroused
In your Milton pottle-deep nor drowsed
A moment of night — toped on, took heed
Of nothing like modern cream-and-curds.
Pay me with deeds, not words!

XI.

For — see your cellarage!
There are forty barrels with Shakespeare's brand.
Some five or six are abroach: the rest
Stand spigoted, fauceted. Try and test
What yourselves call best of the very best!
How comes it that still untouched they stand?
Why don't you try tap, advance a stage
With the rest in cellarage?

XII.

For — see your cellarage!
There are four big butts of Milton's brew.
How comes it you make old drips and drops
Do duty, and there devotion stops?
Leave such an abyss of malt and hops
Embellied in butts which bungs still glue?
You hate your bard! A fig for your rage!
Free him from cellarage!

XIII.

'T is said I brew stiff drink,
But the deuce a flavor of grape is there.
Hardly a May-go-down, 't is just
A sort of a gruff Go-down-it-must —
No Merry-go-down, no gracious gust
Commingles the racy with Springtide's rare!
"What wonder," say you "that we cough, and blink
At Autumn's heady drink?"

XIV.

Is it a fancy, friends?
Mighty and mellow are never mixed,
Though mighty and mellow be born at once.
Sweet for the future, — strong for the nonce!
Stuff you should stow away, ensconce
In the deep and dark, to be found fast-fixed
At the century's close: such time strength spends
A-sweetening for my friends!

XV.

And then — why, what you quaff
With a smack of lip and a cluck of tongue,
Is leakage and leavings — just what haps
From the tun some learned taster taps

With a promise "Prepare your watery chaps!
Here's properest wine for old and young!
Dispute its perfection — you make us laugh!
Have faith, give thanks, but — quaff!"

XVI.

Leakage, I say, or — worse —
Leavings suffice pot-valiant souls.
Somebody, brimful, long ago,
Frothed flagon he drained to the dregs; and lo,
Down whisker and beard what an overflow!
Lick spilth that has trickled from classic jowls,
Sup the single scene, sip the only verse —
Old wine, not new and worse!

XVII.

I grant you: worse by much!
Renounce that new where you never gained
One glow at heart, one gleam at head,
And stick to the warrant of age instead!
No dwarf's-lap! Fatten, by giants fed!
You fatten, with oceans of drink undrained?
You feed — who would choke did a cobweb smutch
The Age you love so much?

XVIII.

A mine's beneath a moor:
Acres of moor roof fathoms of mine
Which diamonds dot where you please to dig;
Yet who plies spade for the bright and big?
Your product is — truffles, you hunt with a pig!
Since bright-and-big, when a man would dine.
Suits badly: and therefore the Koh-i-noor
May sleep in mine 'neath moor!

XIX.

Wine, pulse in might from me !
It may never emerge in must from vat,
Never fill cask nor furnish can,
Never end sweet, which strong began —
God's gift to gladden the heart of man ;
But spirit 's at proof, I promise that !
No sparing of juice spoils what should be
Fit brewage — mine for me.

XX.

Man's thoughts and loves and hates !
Earth is my vineyard, these grew there :
From grape of the ground, I made or marred
My vintage ; easy the task or hard,
Who set it — his praise be my reward !
Earth's yield ! Who yearn for the Dark Blue Sea's,
Let them " lay, pray, bray " — the addle-pates !
Mine be Man's thoughts, loves, hates !

XXI.

But some one says " Good Sir ! "
('T is a worthy versed in what concerns
The making such labor turn out well)
" You don't suppose that the nosegay-smell
Needs always come from the grape ? Each bell
At your foot, each bud that your culture spurns,
The very cowslip would act like myrrh
On the stiffest brew — good Sir !

XXII.

" Cowslips, abundant birth
O'er meadow and hillside, vineyard too,
— Like a schoolboy's scrawlings in and out
Distasteful lesson-book — all about

Greece and Rome, victory and rout —
  Love-verses instead of such vain ado !
So, fancies frolic it o'er the earth
Where thoughts have rightlier birth.

XXIII.

"Nay, thoughtlings they themselves :
  Loves, hates — in little and less and least !
Thoughts ? *'What is a man beside a mount !'*
Loves ? *'Absent — poor lovers the minutes count !'*
Hates ? *'Fie — Pope's letters to Martha Blount !'*
  These furnish a wine for a children's-feast :
Insipid to man, they suit the elves
Like thoughts, loves, hates themselves."

XXIV.

And, friends, beyond dispute
  I too have the cowslips dewy and dear.
Punctual as Springtide forth peep they :
I leave them to make my meadow gay.
But I ought to pluck and impound them, eh ?
  Not let them alone, but deftly shear
And shred and reduce to — what may suit
Children, beyond dispute ?

XXV.

And, here 's May-month, all bloom,
  All bounty : what if I sacrifice ?
If I out with shears and shear, nor stop
Shearing till prostrate, lo, the crop ?
And will you prefer it to ginger-pop
  When I 've made you wine of the memories
Which leave as bare as a churchyard tomb
My meadow, late all bloom ?

XXVI.

Nay, what ingratitude
Should I hesitate to amuse the wits
That have pulled so long at my flask, nor grudged
The headache that paid their pains, nor budged
From bunghole before they sighed and judged
"Too rough for our taste, to-day, befits
The racy and right when the years conclude!"
Out on ingratitude!

XXVII.

Grateful or ingrate — none,
No cowslip of all my fairy crew
Shall help to concoct what makes you wink
And goes to your head till you think you think!
I like them alive: the printer's ink
Would sensibly tell on the perfume too.
I may use up my nettles, ere I 've done;
But of cowslips — friends get none!

XXVIII.

Don't nettles make a broth
Wholesome for blood grown lazy and thick?
Maws out of sorts make mouths out of taste.
My Thirty-four Port — no need to waste
On a tongue that 's fur and a palate — paste!
A magnum for friends who are sound! The sick —
I 'll posset and cosset them, nothing loth,
Henceforward with nettle-broth!

NOTES.

Prince Hohenstiel-Schwangau.

Prince Hohenstiel-Schwangau. Under the slight shield from the exactitudes of history which the fictitious title yields, Louis Napoleon Bonaparte is presented rapt in one of the long reveries which were characteristic of him.

He is musingly foreboding a period of exile again to come for him in his old quarters in London, and fancying that the sympathetic admiration of a fair friend has there led him into a confidential self-revelation. He would fain have the policy Europe found enigmatical escape the charge of hypocrisy, and so he reviews his life, attempting to make clear (1) the law by which he lived; (2) the sort of service he was able to render society; and (3) the means he took to accomplish it, as occasions arose.

The law by which he lived he illustrates by the fact that, being no sooner rested than he desires to employ himself in some way, he has drawn a line on a soiled bit of paper from one blot to another, making no new blots, but shaping something out of that which he found already made. This, he claims, is characteristic, showing in little the larger law by which he is bound to God to do that which his nature has equipped him to do.

The sort of service he is able to render society is, it follows, not that of the originator, the genius in statesmanship who destroys the old and initiates a new historic epoch, but that of the conservator, the practical man, who utilizes extant conditions and opportunities, and helps to carry on unfinished social work.

Despite the bard who would prostrate all mankind, except himself, before the greatness of Nature, the Prince finds in swarming humanity the true centre of the universe whence all progress branches. To save society, if only by figuring as "man o' the moment," seems to him, therefore, the worthiest of tasks. The means he took to accomplish that service were : to restrain the extremists and partisans of all sorts, even the idealists (of whom he was one himself once, when he was only an aspiring voice of liberty in Italy, not having more material facts and interests to consider) ; to befriend the retarded bulk of the people, patiently nourishing its lowest needs and tolerating its slow advance through just such stages as those science shows all life proceeds from, and such stages as he himself passed through in learning as exile how to rule as Prince ; and to aim always throughout all at mere equable sustainment and unification of all parts of the body politic. The position of strain required to hold the whole in place might be misunderstood as passiveness by those who did not see against what obstacles the pose was maintained. So the energy of Laocoön might seem somnolency to those from whom the coils of the serpent were hidden.

Thus, having made his own apology, with a consciousness of the supposed leniency of the self-apologist toward his errors as mere mistakes with the best intentions behind them, he concludes by attempting an apology from other points of view, — that of sagacity, which reads the shrewd worldly precaution of a Thiers into his acts, and an impulsive, high-minded point of view, suggestive of a Victor Hugo, which idealizes his real actions.

The *coup d'état*, and the Commune ; the Italian wars, from the rescue of the Pope to the liberating of Italy and the terms of peace ; the marriage and the *sénatus-consulte* which made his child heir of the Empire, — all these acts of his life are reviewed in these two lights, and the reverie closes with a reference to that which apparently aroused in his mind the possibility of a future exile, —

a letter announcing a final step in the Napoleonic policy over which he has been hesitating.

The poem was written and published in 1871, shortly after the surrender of the French at Sedan and the downfall of Napoleon III. "I think, in the main," wrote Browning, in 1872, in a letter to a friend, "he meant to do what I say, and but for weakness — grown more apparent in his last years than formerly — would have done what I say he did not. I thought badly of him at the beginning of his career, *et pour cause*; better afterward, on the strength of the promises he made, and gave indications of intending to redeem. I think him very weak in the last miserable year. At his worst I prefer him to Thiers's best." Later, again he wrote: "I am glad you like what the editor of the *Edinburgh* calls my eulogium on the second empire — which it is not, any more than what another wiseacre affirms it to be, 'a scandalous attack on the old constant friend of England.' It is just what I imagine the man might, if he pleased, say for himself."

The Greek motto, of which the poet gives an English version, is taken from the "Hercules Furens" of Euripides. It does not strictly agree with his Englishing of the same passage in that play as given in his "Aristophanes' Apology," but is evidently Browning's own translation.

The name used is derived from Hohen-Schwangau, one of the castles of the late King of Bavaria. Why Browning found it appropriate is not obvious. Possibly he associated it by sound with "swan," which in "Pietro of Abano" he uses as a synonym for a superior goose who means to lead the masses; and as an assumption of leadership is in several poems treated with suspicion and satire, it may be guessed that some German grotesquery like "high-helved swan-goose" might have been struck out of his fancy by way of a suitable name.

The sub-title of the poem, "Saviour of Society," was the popular name of the Bonapartists for Louis Napoleon at the time of the *coup d'etat*.

Line 2. *No such bud-mouth:* Miss Howard, an English friend of Prince Louis, who accompanied him to Paris, may have been in Browning's mind as a type of the confidant the Prince's mood would make him turn to.

6. *Œdipus:* who guessed the riddle of the Sphynx, and delivered Thebes from the devastation that mysterious monster was free to inflict until her riddle was solved. (She asked: What being was two-footed, three, ay, and four-footed, and most weak when he walked on most feet? Œdipus answered: Man, who creeps when a babe and leans upon a staff when he is old. For the rest of the story of Œdipus, see "Œdipus the King" and "Œdipus at Colonus" of Sophokles.)

Louis Napoleon's policy was based on so curious a mixture of democratic and imperialistic theories that he was a puzzle to the politicians of his day and therefore commonly spoken of as a "Sphynx." Hence his fancy that the gay young woman whom he imagines is with him receiving his confidences in London in his old place of exile, instead of in the palace at Paris, may be his Œdipus.

7. *Pork-pie hat and crinoline:* the fashions of 1868.

8. *Leicester Square:* this square since the time of the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes has been the haunt of exiled French gentility. While in London in 1838, Louis Napoleon lived in Carlton House, St. James Park, and again, in 1847, in King Street, St. James.

11. *Rede:* Anglo-Saxon *ráed*, from *ráedan*, to discern or read, commonly meaning "counsel;" here used in a sense closer to its original meaning, "discernment or solution."

14. *Home:* David D., the American Spiritualist, hero of "Mr. Sludge, 'the Medium,'" whose "manifestations" Mr. and Mrs. Browning had witnessed. The Prince fears lest he be classed as a charlatan with Home, and his policy with the tricky devices used by Home, unless he finds an interpreter.

18. *Corinth, not dull Thebes, for Laïs' sake:* Corinth

was the most luxurious of Greek cities; Thebes, the capital of Bœotia, cruder and more rustic in its manners. Laïs was the most celebrated courtesan of pleasure-loving Corinth, to whom Alcibiades, Demosthenes, and even Diogenes paid court. The allusion is again to the story of Œdipus, who lived unaware of his royal parentage in Corinth, and who became King of Bœotia after delivering it from the Sphynx's ravages. The Prince likens his "bud-mouthed" confidante to Laïs, who knew the true inwardness of many a statesman and philosopher.

48. *Euclid:* the celebrated mathematician of the third century B. C., who taught in Alexandria, and whose "Elements of Geometry," summing up all prior principles known on the subject, are now the prologue to all further mathematical conclusions. So, the Prince begins the solution of that puzzle, his life and policy, by the characteristic action of drawing a line of connection between two blots he finds ready to his hand on a soiled bit of paper, one of these blots standing, perhaps, for Imperialism, the other for Democracy, the relation he establishes between them opening out the way to an understanding of the larger puzzle of his acts and nature.

59. *Quadrature: i.e.*, squaring that circle solving the problem, — what the whole man meant.

74. *Somebody in Thrace:* Democritus, the Greek philosopher, born in Abdera, a maritime city of Thrace (460–357 B. C.), to whose atomistic system the Prince refers. It derived the secret of all extension from that which has least extension, — indivisible atoms, — and distinguished between the obscure knowledge gained externally through the senses, and the only real knowledge, gained through the mind, tracing all movement and manifestation to the smallest and finest of particles, — soul atoms.

133. *Residenz:* the palace where a Prince resides. The German form of the word is adopted to suit the Bavarian title — Hohen-Schwangau.

186. *Pradier Magdalen:* statue of Saint Mary Magdalen in the Louvre by James Pradier (1790–1852).

331. *Star-change:* the glacial epoch, — when the ice-sheets extended far southward, covering Southern France, for example, — not being accounted for merely by terrestrial causes, has been supposed by geologists to be due to solar and cosmic changes, such as the "star-change" referred to, inducing oscillations in the orbit and axis of the earth and altering its inclination.

350. *Some dervish desert-spectre, swordsman, saint,* etc. : "When in the history of the past a great man appears . . . a Moses, a Mahomet, a Cæsar, a Charlemagne," etc., see "L'Idée Napoléonienne," written in London, 1840, by Louis Napoleon.

439. *Fourier:* François Charles (1772–1837), the socialistic philosopher whose plan for organizing phylansteries or groups for living in commonalty was much discussed in Louis Napoleon's day. — *Comte,* Auguste (1798–1857), the positivist philosopher, devoted, like Fourier, who was an admirer of his, to humanitarian enthusiasms. He was deprived of his professorship at the Paris Polytechnic School on the accession of Louis Napoleon to the Empire.

450. *Kibe:* a chilblain or chap on the heel.

517. *O littleness of man:* this passage on the unwisdom of the bard who depreciates Man in comparison with Nature is probably not Browning's comment on Byron, as Mrs. Orr supposes, although its drift is similar to that of stanza lxvii. in "Fifine at the Fair," but is Louis Napoleon's hit at Victor Hugo's "Song of Ocean" in "Les Châtiments," which contains various unflattering allusions to "Napoleon the Little," or possibly to Hugo's grandiose "Légende des Siècles, Le Titan sur Olympe," closing stanza, asking "Man, what is man?"

539. *Bond Street:* fashionable promenade of the last century, here used as a synonym for a haunt of humanity.

716. *Hercules . . . Atlas:* in course of performing his eleventh labor, which was to secure the golden apples of the Hesperides, Hercules took upon his back the load of the giant Atlas, the supporter of the vault of heaven,

while he was getting the apples. When he returned with them he resumed the burden which had strained the strength of Hercules.

721. *Œta:* on Œta's top Hercules built himself the funeral pile on which he perished.

782. *Proudhon:* Pierre Joseph (1809–1865), writer on social problems, who roused the world in 1840 by his work, "What is Property?" its opening words declaring "Property is Robbery." In 1849, under Louis Napoleon, he was condemned to three years' imprisonment; and again, in 1858, to imprisonment and a fine on account of a pamphlet directed against Napoleon III. and the Roman Church.

787. *The Great Nation:* France was frequently called "La Grande Nation," by Napoleon III. in his addresses.

801. *Blowing hot and cold, sham policy:* the policy summed up in the "Idées Napoléoniennes," written in the Prince's days of exile, involved a combination of the rights of man and the principle of authority. It embraced an alliance between the Empire and Democracy, and outlined a policy of free trade and the brotherhood of European nations which blended curiously in actual practice with the court customs of the Empire, and which yet were not unwarranted by the "Napoleonic Idea."

819. *Once upon a time, when I . . . took wings*, etc.: this whole passage (lines 819-876), refers to the early enthusiasm of Louis Napoleon for the liberty of the people and especially for the freedom of Italy. He joined the Italian movement of 1831, afterwards suppressed by Austria, throwing in his lot with the insurgents of the province of the Romagna against Pope Gregory XVI.

892. *Cool Cayenne:* the capital of French Guiana, where political prisoners were sent; ironically called "cool," the thermometer standing at 76° to 88° the year round.

898. *Nor lives by bread alone:* Matthew iv 4.

919. *The bodily want serve first, said I:* in a pamphlet published in 1844 on the "Extinction of Poverty,"

Louis Napoleon maintained that the first step in the progress of the world must be the material welfare of the lowest classes. Later, as Emperor, although he failed to put in practice the socialistic proposition made in his treatise, to set aside tracts of the public domain for colonization and cultivation at the expense of the State, he advocated large public works with the avowed intention of benefiting working-men as well as beautifying the Empire.

934. *Barabbas:* Matthew xxvii. 15–21. The allusion to the vote "for Barabbas, as a vote untampered with by one wise man," is not so conclusive against the wisdom of the people as it appears, since it is recorded that "the chief priests and elders" persuaded the people. This is an ironical touch characteristic of Browning.

998. *Practise as exile . . . my ups and downs:* in 1815, after the battle of Waterloo, when a child of seven, Louis Napoleon was banished from France with his mother, Queen Hortense, daughter of the Empress Josephine and wife of Louis Bonaparte, brother of the Emperor Napoleon I. Prince Louis' participation in the Italian revolt of 1831 drove him from Italy; only on condition that he would give up his name would Louis Philippe permit him in France. After entering the Swiss army, gaining friends, and making, at Strasburg, in 1836, his utterly unsuccessful attempt to seize the city as "liberator of France," he was imprisoned and shipped to the United States. After a purposely long detention on shipboard, he was landed at Norfolk, Va., in March, 1837, and thence went to New York. News of his mother's illness made him leave for England in June of the same year. Unable to get a passport from any country on the Continent, he set off *incognito* for Switzerland, where his mother was dying. He was protected by the Swiss government for some time, but against the wish of France, and he was watched as an outlaw, until he went to London in 1838. In 1840 he managed to leave London, without being known, to collect about sixty confederates and make

another expedition into France, counting on the enthusiasm roused by the removal of the remains of Napoleon I. to Paris to aid his cause. The Boulogne attempt, however, proved even more disastrous than that of Strasbourg, and he was again seized and imprisoned. After a trial in Paris he was condemned for life to the fortress of Ham, and there led a studious life, writing pamphlets and gardening, — learning his "trade" as a prince, as Browning makes him say, — until 1846, when, unable to get leave to visit his dying father, he planned and executed a daring escape, again landing an exile in England, which was his home until the Revolution of 1848. Thereafter, the law banishing the Bonapartes being abrogated, and being himself elected to serve in the Assembly, he came to live in France in September, 1848, and in December was elected President of the French Republic.

1029. *Xerxes . . . stayed his march*, etc.: "when from Phrygia he entered Lydia, the way dividing . . on the right to Sardis . . Xerxes met with a plane-tree, which on account of its beauty he presented with golden ornaments, and having committed it to the care of one of the Immortals [a chosen band of Persians], on the next day he arrived at Sardis." — Herodotus, vii. 31.

1108. *Kant:* Emmanuel (1724–1804), the great philosopher of the eighteenth century and author of the "Critique of Pure Reason," an epoch-marking work.

1145. *Terni:* the celebrated falls of the Velino, about 650 feet in height, on the way from Perugia to Orte, in Central Italy.

1187. *Laocoön:* the famous group of sculpture in the Cortile del Belvedere in the Vatican Museum, which, according to Pliny, was executed by three Rhodians, and was placed in the palace of Titus. It was re-discovered in 1506. It represents Laocoön, the Trojan priest of Apollo, with his two sons struggling in the deadly coils of two serpents. For the story of Laocoön, see Virgil's Æneid, ii. 41, 201, foll.

1223. *Thiers-and-Victor-Hugo exercise:* that is, no longer an autobiographical revelation, but one from the joint points of view of a historian, on the one side, a shrewd conservatist like *Thiers*, Louis Adolphe (1797–1877), who wrote the "History of the French Revolution" and "The Consulate and Empire," and who was an adherent of Napoleon III.; and, on the other side, of an idealist and radical, like the poet, novelist, and statesman, *Victor Hugo* (1802–1885), author of "Napoleon the Little" and "The History of a Crime," who was exiled after the *coup d'état* of 1851.

1235. *Chose this man, its President . . . and now the proper term of years was out:* the result of the election of December 10, 1848, was five million votes for Louis Napoleon out of the seven million cast. When the time drew nigh for a new president to be chosen, in 1852, apprehension of party divisions and anarchy was one of the strongest weapons made use of by Louis Napoleon and his party to bring about the *coup d'état* of 1851. Having invested Paris with his soldiers, he proclaimed the dissolution of the Assembly, and convoked the people to vote on his own election as Head for ten years, and on a new plan of government, the result of which was a larger vote for him than had been given in 1848.

1363. *Unstridulosity:* absence of harshness, from *stridulous* (Latin, *stridere*), making a harsh creaking sound.

1371. *Dock . . . the electoral body short:* the Assembly adopted, in 1850, an act limiting suffrage under a pretence of purifying it. This docked the votes of over a million laborers and others; and as the act was annulled by Louis in his *coup-d'état* proclamation, in 1851, this re enfranchised body was one of his sources of strength.

1417. *There was uprising:* street barricades and insurrections, not only in Paris, but in several of the provinces, promptly quelled by the army. See Victor Hugo's "History of a Crime" for a graphic account of the struggle.

1534. *Rome, by parity of reasoning, for Romans:* this

refers to the Romagnole revolt of 1849, when France sent troops to deliver the Pope, Pius IX. Of course such a step was opposed to the President's own alliance as a young man with the Italian movement of 1831 (see note, line 819) and was inconsistent with his democratic professions without the explanation given. He wrote at the time to Colonel Ney : " The French republic has not sent an army to Rome to stifle Italian liberty, but, on the contrary, to regulate it, preserving it against its own excesses, and giving it a solid base."

1558. *I' the Capitol where Brennus broke his pate:* Brennus led the Gauls into Italy (382 B. C.), and up the Tarpeian rock in the night into the Capitol, until the sacred geese in the temple of Juno gave the alarm, and thereafter the Romans rallied and utterly overthrew Brennus.

1597. *Whereof the war came:* the war for the liberation of Italy from the rule of Austria.

1651. *The favorable weariness from war: . . . put hod and trowel so in idle hands*, etc.: " The empire is peace," said Napoleon III. at Bordeaux, 1852. " I admit, however, that, like the Emperor, I have many conquests to make. I wish to win the dissident parties to conciliation, and to bring back into the great popular stream the hostile currents which are wasting themselves to no one's profit . . . we have roads to open, harbors to dig, canals to finish," etc. " The Napoleonic Idea," he wrote earlier, " goes into cabins, not with sterile declarations of the Rights of Man, but with the means necessary to appease his hunger."

1672. *Boulevard-building . . . the theatre:* the building of boulevards and beautiful public structures was a noticeable trait of the administration of Napoleon III., in Paris ; their openings were made civic ceremonies, with addresses by the Emperor.

1696. *That Terror:* the spirit of revolt, exemplified to foreign foes and thrones, as it was to the French throne and its friends, in the bloody years of 1793–4, known as the " Reign of Terror."

1883. *We were they who laid her low in the old bad day:* this refers probably to the quelling of the revolt of 1849, already mentioned (see note, line 1534); but the failure of France to object to Austria's intervention in the earlier revolt of 1831, and the French invasion of Italy and interference with the development of the free towns in the far earlier Renaissance period were also offences against Italian liberty which called for recompense from a champion of freedom.

1902. *Cession of Savoy and Nice:* the peace of Villafranca was concluded in July, 1859, without provision for the ceding of Nice and Savoy to France, and was not formally demanded by the Emperor until the spring of 1860.

1904. *Metternich:* Clement Wenceslas (1773–1859), Austrian minister and diplomat of the old school, the heart of the "Holy Alliance" of Continental kings against republican principles.

1922. *Fittest man to rule:* the President was acclaimed Emperor, in November, 1852, by a vote or *plébiscite* of the people.

1934. *Wed the pick o' the world*, etc.: the marriage to Eugénie Montijo, Comtesse de Téba, was announced in 1853. When the birth of the Prince Imperial was announced in 1856, the Emperor, replying to the congratulations of the Legislative Body, spoke of the safety attending the fortunes of "a new dynasty sprung from the ranks of the people."

1975. *Salvatore's boy:* Salvator Rosa (1615–1673), Neapolitan painter of great natural gift for art, his mother being born of a family of painters.

1987. *River that makes oxen white:* Clitumnus, a river of Umbria in Italy. Its waters were said to cause the whiteness belonging to the many white oxen, suitable for the sacrifices, for which its pastures were celebrated by Roman poets.

1994. *Land of the Ox:* the name *Italy* is derived from *Italos* or *Itulos*, which in Tyrrhenian or old Greek meant "an ox."

1997. *Calm fane o' the Clitumnian god:* Browning asked Mrs. Orr to explain that he was wrong in associating the little temple by the river Clitumnus (which he describes from personal knowledge) with the tradition told in the lines following this reference. But he made Prince Hohenstiel himself correct the error in the poem (see line 2136) and place the story at the lake of Nemi, in the Alban mountains, near Rome, anciently called the *Lacus Nemorensis*, where there was a temple devoted to Diana, the remains of which have been discovered, and whose worship in her sacred grove, or *nemus*, from which the Lake is named, was continued in the manner described.

2108. *Famed cave-fish:* the fish found in the lakes of caverns are blind.

2150. *My Cousin-Duke:* Napoleon-Joseph-Charles-Paul Bonaparte (1822–1891), commonly called Prince Napoleon, son of Jerome, the brother of Napoleon I. He was a leader of the "Mountain" or extreme radical party in the Constituent Assembly, but later attached to the interests of his cousin Napoleon III., although restive under the reactionary influence of the Empress Eugénie and her party, who more and more dominated the Emperor's policy. Prince Napoleon married the daughter of Victor Emmanuel, King of Italy, and fomented the attack of Garibaldi and the Italian Party to dislodge the Pope from Rome, in 1867, which was followed by the victory of the French over the Italians at Mentana, and the general abandonment of their trust in the Emperor's professions of friendship. In 1868, the time of the poem, relations between France and Prussia were strained, and the Prince, though he had been openly rebuked for his liberal speeches, and retired from the Council, was sent on a private mission, to secure allies, if possible, in the impending war. The letter referred to may be such a one as the Emperor would be likely to write his cousin upon the war and in announcement and explanation of the policy to be adopted. Such a letter would be seized by Brown-

ing as a significant token of the parting of the ways for the Emperor between his old democratic dreams and that indulgence in Imperialism which was soon to lead through the war with Germany to his downfall.

Fifine at the Fair.

The Prologue, Amphibian, is a fancy suggested by the contrast between a creature whose realm is merely the air and man, whose realm of earth can be exchanged at times, as in swimming, for an amphibious life, dependent partly on water, partly on air. This images a similar contrast between the life of a man on earth and that of an unbodied soul beyond death, whose spiritual realm is approached by the man through his ability to disport himself in the corresponding realm of thought and passion, which is poetry.

Fifine at the Fair is the monologue of a modern intellectualized Don Juan, whose apology to his wife for the versatility of his taste in women — apropos of a gypsy girl who takes his eye at a fair — consists in showing: (1) that there is a value quite its own in the lawless and unconventional; (2) that the free woman who, without exacting favors or stipulating conditions, protects herself, supplements and enriches other representative types of womanhood; (3) that the ideal of beauty or of love is ever a subjective vision, creating an inward world for itself from the merest external hints, all such hints feeding spiritual progress; and (4) that, just as the physical reveals the psychical, the false the genuine, the shifting the permanent, the ugly and imperfect the beautiful and consummate, so character is developed and enriched by experiencing all this relativity, the soul individualized and enabled to seek its befitting mate and to crave the ripe joy of constancy in love.

The scene shifts from the actual village fair (whence husband and wife proceed homeward) to an imagined Carnival in Venice (introduced as a dream occasioned by

playing Schumann's "Carnival"); thence it passes to a swarming colossal Vanity Fair of the whole world, the argument thereby greatening successively in scope through its application to music, philosophy, religion, and social love or democracy as well as to personal love. The characterization of the husband as a highly complex, æsthetic, and subtle sort of Don Juan is evidenced by the intricacy of his justification of himself. But Elvire's distrust of him which is insinuated through his replies to her serves still more to characterize him as well as to reveal her own penetration. Most of all is the man behind the apology revealed by its climax, which is the sudden summons from Fifine, prepared for and expected by him, an incident saying louder than words that he has not yet attained that developed character which, according to him, results in the perception of the beauty of constancy.

The motto from Molière's "Don Juan," translated by Browning, indicates that the poet has here taken the lady's challenge and framed a defence for a Don Juan which will claim that his very inconstancies are but a tribute to unalterable love.

7. *Hoarding:* boards, such as are used for sheds and booths; from *hoard*, a fence.

10. *Pornic and Saint Gille:* fishing-towns on the coast of Brittany.

12. *Bateleurs, baladines:* conjurors and street dancers.

24. *Tricot:* knitted stuff, fitting close.

27. *Perpend:* weigh well; from the Latin *perpendere.*

28. *Not for every Gawain to gaze upon the Grail:* Gawain, King Arthur's nephew and one of his knights, was foremost in vowing to seek the Holy Grail, but while on his quest was warned that he had lived too mischievously, and that none such should behold it. (See Malory's Morte d'Arthur, xiii. 7, 16.)

38. *Frenetic:* frenzied.

47. *Losels:* worthless fellows, *lose*-alls.

90. *Windle-straws:* the tufted hair-grass.

163. *Almandines:* a kind of garnet.

169. *Quarte and tierce:* especial kinds of thrust used in fencing.

202. *Sick Louis:* Louis Onze = Louis XI. (1423–1483).

210. *Helen! pushed . . . by Lady Venus:* Helen, daughter of Zeus and Leda, wife of Menelaus, but given by Venus to Paris, son of King Priam of Troy, and thus made the cause of the war waged against Troy by the Greeks, of which the Iliad tells.

218. *Cleopatra:* Queen of Egypt. See Plutarch's Life of Antony and Shakespeare's "Antony and Cleopatra."

291. *A quintal:* a weight of 100 pounds.

305. *A certain myth:* the form of the story of Helen of Troy used by Euripides in his "Helena," which see.

362. *Ptolemaic witch:* Cleopatra, daughter of the Ptolemies, the royal dynasty of Egypt; here likened to an Asian mirror of burnished bronze, not drawing all light to herself as a focus of danger like a polished Greek shield, befitting Helen, but receiving and reflecting it, while the Saint, like a stained-glass window, subdues, and Fifine, like broken glass sherds among rubbish, catches and darts out light.

551. *Doré:* Gustav (1833–1883), illustrator of the Bible, Dante, and Milton; his style and gift are less rare than those of Rafael, who is a consummate fruit of Renaissance art.

566. *Pochade:* a rough sketch.

638. *Bazzi:* Il Sodoma, the Italian painter (1479–1549).

641. *Enharmonic change*, etc.: the modulation here described is one from the dominant (that is, the chord on the fifth degree of the scale) of D♯ minor, A♯, C𝄪, E♯, G♯, which is enharmonically changed (that is, the signature of the notes is changed without their pitch being changed), so that it becomes what is called the augmented sixth chord on the lowered sixth of D major, and would

read B♭, D, F♯, G♯, and instead of being resolved on the tonic of D♯ minor, as it would be in the first instance, is resolved on the tonic of D major. It is one of the most surprising and beautiful of musical modulations, and the poet is right in hinting that no technical description of it can portray the effect of this leap into light and life.

684. *Ask Plato else:* the reference is to Plato's "Symposium," which gives the different views of love expressed at a banquet, and in particular to the speeches of the physician, Eryximachus, Aristophanes, and Socrates.

693. *Fiat lux:* let there be light (Genesis i. 3).

706. *Gérôme:* a French painter (1824).

724. *English Reynolds:* Joshua (1723–1792), a portrait painter refined in taste and of such tempered elegance in style as the allusion suggests, so that the softness of his faces would stir such reply as Garrick, the great actor of Reynolds' time (1716–1779), made to Thalia, muse of comedy, and less forbidding than Melpomene, her sister muse of tragedy.

779. *Eidothée:* daughter of Proteus, the old man of the sea. See "Odyssey," iv. 475.

903. *Glumdalclich:* devoted to Gulliver while he was in Brobdignag. See Swift's "Gulliver's Travels."

905. "*Theosutos e broteios eper kekramene*": Greek for "God, man, or both together mixed," from the "Prometheus Bound" of Æschylus; or, as Mrs. Browning translates it, "Of a god or a mortal or nature between."

931. *Chrysopras:* a precious stone, a variety of chalcedony, or beryl.

935. *Gastroknemian:* pertaining to the calf of the leg.

968. *Life's common chord:* a common chord consists of a root and a third major (4 semitones) or minor (3 semitones) and a fifth (7 semitones) over it.

969. *Harmonics far and faint:* harmonics are the sounds formed by the breaking up of a string or other vibrating medium into partial vibrations; thus every note is made up of the fundamental sound and the fainter sounds of these partial vibrations. They give intervals

starting with the octave and the fifth which belong to the scale of the fundamental.

1105. *Man, outcast, "howls" . . . Childishest childe:* refers to Byron's "Childe Harold," canto 4. The lines and words cited are taken from stanza clxxx. This verse was obnoxious to Browning, on account of its subordinating man or the human intelligence and will to matter or cosmic force. Its wrong grammatical construction seems also to have annoyed him.

1147. *Thalassia:* sea-nymph, from the Greek word for the sea.

1148. *Triton:* a sea deity, a son of Neptune.

1294. *Arion:* a Greek poet and musician, who was rescued from drowning by a dolphin; his song to his lyre having lured the creatures round the vessel, one of them bore him to the shore.

1298. *Periander:* the tyrant of Corinth.

1299. *Methymnæan hand:* Arion was born at Methymna, in Lesbos.

1309. *Orthian:* of Orthia; a name for Apollo.

1319. *Tænarus:* the point of land to which the dolphin carried Arion, whence he travelled to the court of Periander.

1438. *See Horace to the boat:* Horace, i. 3.

1454. *The Long Walls:* the wall to Phalerum on the east, about four miles long, and the wall to the harbor of Piræus on the west, about four and a half miles long; between these two, at a short distance from the latter and parallel to it, another wall was erected, thus making two walls leading to the Piræus, with a narrow passage between them. The entire circuit of the walls was nearly twenty-two miles, of which about five and a half miles belonged to the city, nine and a half to the long walls, and seven miles to Piræus, Munychia, and Phalerum.

1461. *Iostephanos:* violet-crowned — a name for Athens.

1588. *Why, Schumann's "Carnival":* celebrated composition of Robert Schumann, consisting of a set of pieces, the themes of nearly all of them being built up from a simple phrase of four notes, A, E♭, C, B. Called,

in German, A, S, C, H, which make up the name of a town where a friend of Schumann lived. In the last piece of the set an old tune is used as the theme. The time-honored figures of the pantomime are given interpretations in these pieces, as well as four portrait studies, labelled, respectively, Chiarina (for Clara Wieck, afterwards Mrs. Schumann), Chopin, Paganini, and Estrella (for another woman-friend).

1663. *She, toe-tips and staccato*, etc. : in the piece in the "Carnival" called "Columbine and Pantalon," she is represented in presto staccato passages, and he in less rapid legato passages.

1673. *Three keys, flat, flat and flat, never a sharp at all:* this piece, already referred to, is written in three keys ; it begins in F minor with four flats, passes to D♭ major with five flats, and ends in F major with one flat.

2045. *Druid monument:* remains of the kind described are frequent in this part of France, and near Pornic are some of the finest specimens of the *menhirs*, or huge upright stones, rude mysterious monuments of a worship of the sources of life.

2110. *The ladder, Jacob saw:* Genesis xxviii. 12.

2165. *Protoplast:* the original, the thing first formed.

2215. *Comfort to the Titan*, etc.: Prometheus bound to his rock, in the "Prometheus Bound" of Æschylus, already referred to, to whom a band of sea-nymphs brought solace.

2226. *Moirai Trimorphoi:* the Tri-form Fates.

The Epilogue, The Householder, is a symbolical poem, humorously and dramatically prefiguring a scene of reunion between any husband, dominant in his house of flesh and marriage custom, who has had enough of the experimentation accorded husbands, and any wife whose less fleshly and more protected experience has not been less wearing than his. The wife sums up the outcome of the discipline that has developed both, with the statement of the Ideal that has been their guiding star in the evolution of a better marriage, — "Love is all and Death is naught."

Pacchiarotto, Etc.

The Prologue expresses the speaker's pleasure in looking at a dead wall clothed with vines, and makes the impression it presents of mysterious life pulsating over an inert surface symbolical of spiritual force stirring behind matter, and of the special kindred soul whose indwelling spirit has power to transfuse the external shows of life that bar him away from her, rallying his faith in "the subtle thing that 's spirit" and calling him to a reunion despite material obstacles and worldly interventions.

Of Pacchiarotto, and How he Worked in Distemper is a rollicking poem relating an anecdote of Pacchiarotto, a painter who was also a reformer or critic of Society, and whose criticism was born of a lively sense of his own superiority. Browning adds to the historic incident the Abbot's admonishment to Pacchiarotto to give up attempting to better things since argument is useless, and Pacchiarotto's retort, that, if so, the Abbot's admonishment must be equally useless, but that in his case a dead man has proved more convincing than a live one, and has shown him the one real obstacle to effective criticism of any sort, — vanity. A conclusion follows addressed by Browning to his early critics, apparently implying that the cap fits, although leaving it to them to try it on. For their sakes he has dropped in this plain tale the harsh analytics they blame, and for the complex rhythms they find faulty has substituted the jocular whistle of the verse he dedicates to their discomfiture.

3. *Giacomo Pacchiarotto:* painter of Siena (1474–*circa* 1540), and advocate of revolt. In 1533, during the famine at Siena, he, with his fellow-members of the Club called the Bardotti, was consulting upon the situation, when a dispute on who should be their leader against officialism arose; they took fright and disbanded, says Vasari, upon whose account Browning founded his narration, the party of the magistracy taking such severe measures against offenders that Pacchiarotto was forced

to hide in a tomb, whence, after two days, almost dead with hunger and the stench of the corpse and covered with vermin, he found refuge with the brothers of the Observance, as the poem relates.

7. *Pacchia:* Girolamo (1477–15—), belonged to the same revolutionary club, and is often confused with Pacchiarotto. The Nativity of the Virgin in the Chapel of Saint Bernadino, Siena, is one of the best examples of his good work as a painter.

12. *My Kirkup:* Baron Kirkup (born 1830), a connoisseur of art, who was on friendly terms with Browning at Florence. He discovered Dante's portrait in the Bargello at Florence. — *San Bernardino:* a chapel named in honor of one of the Franciscan preachers who founded the Order of the "Observance," see line 309.

17. *Bazzi:* the Italian painter Giannantonio-Bazzi (*circa* 1479–1549) bore the name "Sodona," or "Il Sodoma," as a family name, and signed it upon some of his pictures. Bazzi was corrupted into Razzi, and "Sodona" into "Sodoma." — *Beccafumi:* a painter of the Siena school, who lived at the beginning of the sixteenth century.

26. *Sopra-sotto:* upside-down.

71. *Quiesco:* I rest.

79. *Priest armed with bell, book and candle:* in the major excommunication the bell is rung, the sentence read from the book, and the lighted candle extinguished.

87. *Frescanti:* painters in fresco.

132. *Boanerges:* sons of Thunder, — name given by Jesus Christ to His disciples James and John.

161. *Juvenal:* Roman satirist; flourished at Rome in the latter half of the first century. He was particularly outspoken concerning the licentiousness of the Roman ladies.

162. *Quæ nemo dixisset in toto*, etc.: "which things in general nobody would have spoken about, unless (by Gad) he had a dirty mouth."

164. *Apage:* away! begone!

190. *Non verbis sed factis:* not by words, but by deeds.

199. *Grain out of Sicily:* Sicily is still famous for its wheat. It was in ancient times sacred to Ceres, goddess of corn.

207. *Fescue:* a straw or little stick used to point out their letters to children.

213. *Hornbook:* a primer, originally bound in horn; hence the name.

223. "*Freed Ones*," "*Bardotti*": a revolutionary club to which Pacchia and Pacchiarotto both belonged, broken up by the authorities in 1535.

258. *Kai tà loipa:* the Greek equivalent for *et cetera*, and so forth.

259. *Kappas, taus, lambdas:* the initial letters of this phrase, κ. τ. λ., used like *etc.*

295. "*Per ignes incedis*": thou art treading upon fires. Horace, Odes, ii. i. 6.

309. *St. John's Observance:* Osservanti, the Franciscans so called, because they observed the original rule as laid down by Saint Francis, went barefoot, and professed absolute poverty.

329. "*Haud in posse sed esse mens*": mind as it is, not as it might be.

375. *Thill-horse:* a horse which goes between the thills or shafts.

444. *Imposthume:* a boil or abscess.

451. "*Sæculorum in sæcula!*": forever and ever.

452. *Jorum:* drinking-pot.

455. *Your Benedicite:* Bless ye! Your blessing.

463. *Drabs, blues and yellows:* the writers in the drab, blue, and yellow covered British reviews.

467. *He who directed the measure:* Alfred Austin, the present poet laureate, who is still more definitely referred to in the passage ending in a blank, lines 529–534, where "Austin" is obviously the rhyme to match "sauced in." In his "Poetry of the Period," belittling Tennyson, Browning, and Swinburne, he called Browning's diction

"muddy and unmusical," while Shakespeare's and Milton's is both clear and musical.

491. *Beethoven . . . Schumann . . . contrapuntist:* these most eminent composers of the romantic school took liberties with the old laws of counterpoint (or writing music in parts) which were very strict. Browning intimates that his critics are formalists in poetic metre, and that if his liberties with verse-forms were intentional and enlightened like Beethoven's, these critics are not qualified to judge them.

498. *Aubade:* a daybreak song at the window of the person whom it is intended to honor.

519. *Tommy-make-room-for-your-Uncle:* popular song, here used to denote the sort of music of which these critic-poets are capable as well as to suit their *rôle* of May-day chimney-sweeps.

521. *Xanthippe:* Socrates' wife, who bore this name, is said to have showered upon Socrates' head a kettleful of dirty water. Browning gives her name to his muse, whom his critics may find here a little rude and vixenish.

527. *Jack-in-the-Green:* writer of "Modern Poets" in *Edinburgh Review*.

529. *Quilp-Hop-o'-my-thumb . . . Banjo-Byron:* see note on **467**.

547. *Karterotaton belos:* the strongest dart. (Pindar, Olympic Odes, i.)

548. *Melos* = mode.

556. *Ad hoc:* hitherto.

568. *Os frontis:* the forehead.

573. *Hebdome, hieron emar:* the seventh, the holy day. May 7th, Browning's birthday.

575. *Tei gar Apollona chrusaora egeinato Leto:* on which the golden-sworded Apollo was born of Latona.

580. *Pheidippides:* the swift Greek runner, celebrated by Browning in his poem of that name. Of course, if snoring is left to Pheidippides, there will be none.

581. *Euripides:* the great innovator in Greek tragedy, who tirelessly created dramas though in the face of much

objection and depreciation from conservative Athenian critics. That Browning's sympathy would go out to one laboring under such circumstances is evident; and that he would find him an inspiring exemplar.

At the "Mermaid" puts into the mouth of Shakespeare the refutation of the supposition that his life is to be discovered in his plays. He disclaims any desire to be considered "next Poet" on the ground that he has not revealed his soul to the public. Such a poet he depicts in contrast to himself, — one, a pessimist, seeing no good in the world, with a mind self-centred upon his own woes; the other, the optimist, seeing good everywhere in the world, regarding his personal woes of no account. The world will object that unless he lays bare his own soul, he cannot hope to touch the heart of humanity. Very well, he will wait for recognition in the future, in the meantime content to be friend and good fellow.

The "Mermaid": a tavern in Cheapside, the favorite resort of the great Elizabethan dramatists and poets. The motto of the poem is adapted from Ben Jonson's lines: "To the Reader," opposite the portrait of Shakespeare, in the First Folio edition: "This figure that thou here seest put, It was for gentle Shakespeare cut."

50. *Orichalc:* a mixed metal, something like bronze.

103. *Marlowe:* Christopher (1564–1593), Shakespeare's greatest predecessor in play-writing in respect to poetic gift.

104. *Ben:* Jonson (1574–1637), Shakespeare's closest contemporary rival, whose plays very notably made use of varied knowledge.

114. *Threw Venus:* the most successful throw of the dice, double sixes, was called "Venus" by the Romans.

House deprecates the assumption of the public, that the private and personal affairs of a poet be open to it. The indelicacy is illustrated by an accidental exposure of a house-interior, and the comments of the curious crowd. As to Shakespeare's high example, as alleged in his sonnets, it is doubtful, since he must then have abandoned his characteristic dramatic bent.

38. *With this same key*, etc. A quotation from Wordsworth's sonnet beginning, "Scorn not the Sonnet."

Shop is a picturesque presentation of the thought that one's life should not be lived merely for the sake of worldly success, and that if sordid interests are necessary to ensure the existence of the body, the mind and soul should not be allowed to suffer for want of spiritual food.

Pisgah-Sights. Views over the whole of life from the heights of ripe experience. I. Perceives the reconciliation and relation of all its elements, — unity. II. Perceives the value of imperfection, the uselessness of reformation — relativity. At the close of the life of Moses, the Lord caused him to view the land he was not to enter, from "the top of Pisgah." Deut. xxxiv. 1–4.

Fears and Scruples gives expression to the doubts which beset one who formerly believed implicitly in God (symbolized as an Unseen Friend), but whose belief has been shaken by the criticisms of others, whom he wishes he might refute with a word; but God makes no direct revelations to him, so he concludes that though his belief is not capable of absolute proof he will be thankful for the truth manifest in the ideal. Even this position is assaulted by a menace from some one who suggests that perhaps God is simply trying man's faith by not revealing himself, and will blame man for not gaining a knowledge of him through all obstructions. But that God would be a monster who refused to accept love because it had not attained perfect knowledge of him, for is not man ready to love him fully revealed as he already loves his manifestations? The only answer to this is that God is God, — something higher not lower than man. In a letter to Mr. William G. Kingsland, Browning thus interpreted the poem: —

"I think that the point I wanted to illustrate in the poem you mention was this: Where there is a genuine love of the 'letters' and 'actions' of the invisible 'friend,' — however these may be disadvantaged by an inability to

meet the objections to their authenticity or historical value urged by 'experts' who assume the privilege of learning over ignorance, — it would indeed be a wrong to the wisdom and goodness of the 'friend' if he were supposed capable of overlooking the actual 'love' and only considering the 'ignorance' which, failing to in any degree affect 'love,' is really the highest evidence that 'love' exists. So I *meant*, whether the result be clear or no. . . ."

Natural Magic and **Magical Nature** are supplementary lyrics, both emblematical of the power of spirit over fact, but the first expressive more particularly of the inexplicable power of one personality over another's life and circumstances, and the second of the equally wonderful power of a soul over the conditions of its own existence.

Bifurcation presents a case of conflict between love and duty, in the guise of two epitaphs imagined by the lover, which sum up two life-histories: the one of the woman who chooses for herself the smoother and safer path of duty, contenting her heart with bidding her lover to be constant, and to await with her the pleasure of a future life where they need not make a choice between good things, but have both easily; the other of the man, left perforce, by her decision, upon the rougher road, to proceed against ceaseless pains and hindrances, content only in a faith that does not dissever love from duty nor count the cost of enduring actual imperfection for its sake; both lives, thus set forth, calling for a nice decision as to which was sinner or saint.

Numpholeptos is an expression of womanhood as ideally conceived and actually restricted by man. Under the image of a man caught by a nymph (*Numpho-leptos*) and ensnared to undertake a series of quests colored by the unnatural broken light emanating from this unreal feminity, in the vain hope of gaining a genuine human love from her in return, an implication is given of what ideal womanhood is for man and what actual womanhood could be. The symbol is, therefore, not explicable completely by any one or all ideals of womanhood as related to man

The type presented is complex, unreal, and yet historical, implying associations with the Pagan notions of the nymphs from whom the poem derives its name, — the primitive Zeus-begotten daughters of nature; with the passive woman of the Renaissance or of Chivalry, who called on men for ceaseless love and service; with the exalted woman-visions, more or less founded on actual Beatrices and Lauras by Dantes and Petrarchs; with the divination of what woman has it actually in herself to be when she possesses knowledge and purity as a natural consequence of free individual life, obtaining them not by inheritance and imagination but by achievement. Replying to an inquiry as to the purport of "Numpholeptos," Browning wrote: —

"An allegory of an impossible ideal object of love, accepted conventionally as such by a man, who all the while cannot quite blind himself to the demonstrable fact that the possessor of knowledge and purity obtained without the natural consequences of obtaining them by achievement, — not inheritance, — such a being is imaginary, not real, a nymph and no woman; and only such an one would be ignorant of and surprised at the results of a lover's endeavor to emulate the qualities which the beloved is entitled to consider as pre-existent to earthly experience, and independent of its inevitable results.

"I had no particular woman in my mind; certainly never intended to personify wisdom, philosophy, or any other abstraction; and the orb, raying color out of whiteness, was altogether a fancy of my own. The 'seven-spirits' are in the Apocalypse, also in Coleridge and Byron: a common image."

Appearances symbolizes by means of two illustrative incidents how unimportant externals are in comparison with the life beneath them.

St. Martin's Summer argues that old loves though buried come forth in ghostly shape to haunt the new love, and remind it that it may not be enduring; therefore it is better not to protest too much, nor to look upon it as

durable masonry, which tempts destruction, but rather as a light trellis that may either bend with circumstances, or else fall flat without causing much dismay. But even this concession to the ghosts fails to reduce their interference to "faint march-music." While the new love is congratulating itself upon having found a safe basis, the ghosts assert themselves, proving that they are more real than the new love which, in fact, receives all its glamour through the interfusion of their spirit; and the conclusion is that tears and clamor are the sole portion of the new love, and in the discovery of this, moreover, the lover is even bereft of the comfort of the ghosts of the old love.

St. Martin's Summer: from October 9 to November 11. Also called Martinmas and Martelmas, because the feast of St. Martin is kept on November 11. The feast of St. Luke being on October 18, it is also called St. Luke's Summer. It corresponds with our Indian Summer.

71. When Penelope and Ulysses meet after their long separation, in the last book of the Odyssey, she, as soon as she is convinced that it is indeed her husband, throws her arms about his neck and weeps.

Hervé Riel. A ballad of the Breton hero who piloted the French ships into harbor and saved them from the English, and being urged to name his own reward asked leave to go and see his wife. "Written in 1867, published 1871, in the *Cornhill*, Browning desiring to give a subscription to the Fund on behalf of the French after the siege of Paris by the Germans in 1870-71. He sent the £100 given by Mr. Smith for the poem to that fund. When the poem appeared, the facts of the story were denied at St. Malo; but on the reports to the French Admiralty of the time being looked up, they were found to be correct. Browning was mistaken, however, in stating that Hervé Riel was granted but one day's holiday in which to see his wife, "La Belle Aurore," — that is, if the *Notes sur le Croisic* (par Caillo Jeune) are correct. "Ce brave homme ne demanda pour récompense d'un

ervice aussi signalé qu'un congé absolu pour rejoindre sa femme, qu'il nommait la Belle Aurore." This fact was brought to the poet's notice by Dr. Furnivall, to whom he writes: "Where do you find that the holiday of Hervé Riel was for more than a day — his whole life-time? If it is to be found, I have strangely overlooked it." That he *had* "overlooked it" is evident from the following letter: —

". . . You are undoubtedly right, and I have mistaken the meaning of the phrase — I suppose through thinking that, if the coasting-pilot's business ended with reaching land, he might claim as a right to be let go: otherwise, an absolute discharge seems to approach in importance a substantial reward. Still — truth above all things." (*Poet-lore*, Feb. 1896.)

1. *At the Hogue:* Cap la Hougue.

2. *The English*, etc.: Louis XIV. had sent an expedition against England to restore James II. to the throne when the English and Dutch fleets fell upon them and the French retired.

5. *Saint-Malo:* an island in the mouth of the Rance River which runs into the English Channel at St. Malo.

30. *Plymouth Sound:* the harbor of the Devonshire English naval station.

43. *Tourville:* the French naval leader.

46. *Malouins:* inhabitants of St. Malo.

49. *Grève:* the dangerous sands left bare by the ebbing tide.

53. *Solidor:* the fort defending the bay of St. Michel.

A Forgiveness presents a conflict between two proud souls, who love each other, but who do not fully understand each other's natures, resulting in crime and repentance on the woman's part, and in self-justified crime on the man's part. The incidents of the story come out in the husband's confession to a priest. The wife, jealous of her husband's attention to state affairs, thinks to teach him her worth in arousing his jealousy by an intrigue with another man, whom she avows to her husband she

loves. Scorn at her utter contemptibleness is the result, and though all sympathy is over between them, everything appears to go on smoothly in the eyes of the world. At the end of three years the wife feels that unless she confesses to her husband the truth, that she had loved him and him alone, she will die, and gain the peace she does not deserve. She chooses, therefore, to live, and, confessing to him, asks only that she may be allowed to go and burn her life out to ashes. In learning the truth, the husband's scorn is raised to hate. He requires her to write down her confession. She, evidently fearing that this change in his attitude means that he now thinks her, according to his code, worthy of death, hopes that her blood for ink will suffice, to which he acquiesces equivocally while handing her the poisoned weapon that kills her. In her death he tells her hate is quenched in vengeance, and that dead he pardons her. The final stanza unexpectedly increases the dramatic intensity of the scene by revealing the fact that the confession has been made to the man with whom his wife had intrigued, and who can no longer escape the husband's vengeance. Mary Wilson says of this poem: "Nothing could more effectively express the stoic Spaniard, his code and ideal, than the measured punctiliousness, the gradation from contempt to hatred, the self-command, the unhasting, unresting vindictiveness, and the exquisite torture devised for his enemy."

99. *Which changed for me a barber's basin straight into — Mambrino's helm:* Mambrino was a Moorish king, in the romantic poems of Bojardo and Ariosto, who was the possessor of an enchanted golden helmet, which rendered the wearer invulnerable. The allusion is to an episode in the "Adventures of Don Quixote," when the crazy knight thought he had found the golden helmet in what proved to be nothing but a copper basin, highly polished, which a barber on his way to bleed a patient had put on his head to protect a new hat during a shower. Don Quixote exclaims to Sancho: "Seest thou not yon knight coming toward us on a dapple-gray steed with a

helmet of gold on his head ? . . . If I mistake not there cometh one toward us who carries on his head Mambrino's helmet concerning which thou mayest remember I swore the oath " (chap. xxi.).

201. *Arquebus*, or harquebus, the earliest form of hand gun, resembling the modern musket, first used about 1476.

249. *Arms of Eastern workmanship:* Browning had in his possession just such a collection of arms.

Cenciaja is a note throwing light on the passage in Shelley's tragedy of " The Cenci," act v. sc. 4, wherein Cardinal Camillo reports the Pope's decision that Beatrice and her brother must die. Browning's poetic commentary on this supplies an account of the historic occurrences connected with Paolo Santa Croce's matricide which determined the Pope's decision in the then pending Cenci case, and incidentally reveals the secret motives which instigated Cardinal Aldobrandini and Judge Taverna to secure the condemnation of Paolo's innocent brother Onofrio ; the whole serving in Browning's hands to reinforce Shelley's picture of the time, and to illustrate with grim irony how unerring " God's justice " has been when left in men's hands.

Of the historic basis of the poem, Browning writes : " I got the facts from a contemporaneous account I found in a MS. volume containing the ' Relations ' of the Cenci affair — with other memorials of Italian crime — lent me by Sir J. Simeon ; who published the Cenci Narrative, with notes, in the series of the Philobiblion Society. It was a better copy of the ' Relation ' than that used by Shelley, differing at least in a few particulars. I believe I have seen somewhere that the translation was made by Mrs. Shelley — the note appended to an omitted passage seems a womanly performance." Of the Title and Motto he writes : " ' Aia ' is generally an accumulative yet depreciative termination : ' Cenciaja,' — a bundle of rags, — a trifle. The proverb means ' Every poor creature will be pressing into the company of his

betters,' and I used it to deprecate the notion that I intended anything of the kind."

Filippo Baldinucci is an old man's racy account of an incident of the seventeenth century, recalled to mind by his relish of his nephew's disorderliness in pelting Jews. The boy's prejudices, appearing as a faint reflex of the Christian trick his uncle narrates, are thus dramatically shown to be a heritage from an elder generation, and already growing out of date. The religious tolerance embodied in current laws, on the other hand, falling in line with the larger view of all religions evinced by the burly young Jew, in the sequel of the old man's story, serves to vindicate and avenge the persecuted and to set forth in a humorous, satirical light the childishness of the piety of the persecutors. The first part of the old man's story is given, as an actual occurrence in the life of the painter Lodovico Buti (1624–1696), in a passage in Filippo Baldinucci's 'Notices of Painters' ('*Notizie dei Professori del Disegno da Cimabue in quà*,' 1629–1670, published 1681–1728). The Rabbi who remonstrated is there told: "'Your bargain has been fulfilled to the letter, and what else do you want? It is my opinion that you are very presumptuous, that with your sordid money you wished to buy my patron's liberty." The story then closes, thus: "Then the Rabbis dispersed discontentedly, but tacitly acknowledging they were wrong. They said no more about it, and no longer tried with their ill-gotten riches to control the piety of good Christians." The sequel, as told in stanzas xxxvii. to lvi., is of Browning's own devising, and of course is not to be found in Baldinucci's book, so the poet cleverly accounts for this in stanza xxxvi. by making Filippo declare, "Plague o' me if I record it in my book!" The initial situation of the boy and his uncle is, also, Browning's own dramatic setting of the occurrence.

176. *Esaias* — "*stiff-necked Jews!*" Isaiah xlviii. 4: 'Thy neck is an iron sinew."

397. *Leda, Ganymede or Antiope* refers to three of the

many loves of Jupiter for whom he abandoned his godlike aspect and assumed for the sake of Leda, the wife of Tyndarus, King of Sparta, the form of a swan; for Ganymede, the fair Trojan boy, the form of an eagle; for Antiope, the daughter of Asopus, the river-god, the form of a satyr.

402. *Titian:* the great Venetian painter, 1477–1576.

Epilogue. In the Prologue to "Pacchiarotto" the poet addressed with gigantic mirth his adverse critics. In this epilogue he rallies his readers in general, who complain that his verse lacks sweetness and allurement. He reminds them that the wine of poetry may be made and preferred either strong or sweet, but if it is to be both mellow and mighty it must be given time to mature smoothness. From vat and cask comes later that which in the bottle is labelled choice. He shrewdly suspects that those who hold the classics up to him as models of faultless strength disport themselves neither as freely nor as independently as they intimate with the time-honored vintage. As for him, he exclaims, though time may never stamp his wine with the highest seal, affirming body and bouquet both, never has he spared the huge outpour requisite for that best brewage. On Man not Nature has he dwelt, and out of private emotions and passing sentiments he has steadily refused to make easy capital. Being no ingrate he satirically offers to those who don't relish the "Thirty-four Port" he is putting to the proof what amusement they may get from a tonic — his "nettle-broth."

μεστοὶ, etc.: Pour us out of the wine-jars wine black and flower-sweet.

2. *The dearest poet I ever knew*, etc.: Elizabeth Barrett Browning, in her "Wine of Cyprus."

67. *Attar-gul:* essence of roses.

82. *Forty barrels with Shakespeare's brand:* the thirty seven plays, the Sonnets, Venus and Adonis, and Lucrece

90. *Four big butts of Milton's brew:* probably refers

besides "Paradise Lost" and "Paradise Regained" to "Comus" and "Samson Agonistes."

143. *Koh-i-noor:* the celebrated diamond "Mountain of light" presented to Queen Victoria in 1850.

159. *Let them "lay, pray, bray"*: Byron's praise of ocean by disparagement of man and with faulty grammar. "Childe Harold's Pilgrimage," Canto IV. stanza clxxx.: "And dashest him again to earth;—there let him lay."